

Priorities of the 58th Session of the General Assembly

United Nations Reform and Strengthening

- (A) Advancing initiatives for the further rationalisation of the General Assembly's Agenda
- (B) Encouraging uniform and coherent discussion of development issues in the Plenary and Main Committees of the General Assembly
- (C) Enhancing the role and functioning of the General Committee
- (D) Assessing a decade of Security Council reform initiatives and prospects for further progress
- (E) Encouraging further co-ordination and co-operation within the United Nations system and, in particular, coherence among the Bretton Woods Institutions and the World Trade Organisation
- (F) Managing the process of inter-governmental consideration of the Secretary-General's initiatives on United Nations reform

Priorities of the 58th Session of the General Assembly

What have we accomplished in light of the priorities set out by this year's Presidency?

"Given the challenges we faced at the beginning and throughout the session, what we have been able to achieve together, and the ambitious agenda we have set ourselves for the remainder of the session," President Julian Hunte said, "it is safe to say that this session has thus far been nothing short of extraordinary".

On one major priority: the **revitalization of the General Assembly**, President Julian Hunte assisted by a team of Facilitators, began in October, a process of consultations to determine a course of action for revitalization of the United Nations General Assembly. Three informal open-ended plenary meetings, on 15 of October, 18 November and 12 December, as well as the 27-31 October debate on Item 55, "Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly" provided the platform for expression of views, comments on proposals and broad discussion of the revitalization issue in general. A consensus resolution was adopted on December 19 as a means of ensuring that the General Assembly can effectively meet contemporary global challenges.



General Assembly

Distr.: General
13 January 2004

Fifty-eighth session
Agenda item 55

Resolution adopted by the General Assembly

[without reference to a Main Committee (A/58/L.49/Rev.1)]

58/126. Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly

The General Assembly,

Recalling its previous resolutions relating to the revitalization of its work,¹

Aware of the need to enhance its authority and role and to improve its working methods,

Decides to adopt the text contained in the annex to the present resolution.

76th plenary meeting
19 December 2003

Annex

A. Enhancing the authority and role of the General Assembly

In order to enhance the authority and role of the General Assembly, it is decided that:

1. Member States reaffirm the relevant provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and the United Nations Millennium Declaration² on the central position of the General Assembly.
2. The Security Council is invited to submit periodically, in accordance with Article 24 of the Charter, special subject-oriented reports to the General Assembly for its consideration on issues of current international concern.
3. The Security Council is invited to continue with initiatives to improve the quality of its annual report to the General Assembly, mandated by Article 24, paragraph 3, of the Charter, in order to provide the Assembly with a substantive, analytical and material account of its work, in accordance with resolution 51/193.

¹ Resolutions 46/77 of 12 December 1991, 47/233 of 17 August 1993, 48/264 of 29 July 1994, 51/193 of 17 December 1996, 51/241 of 31 July 1997, 52/163 of 15 December 1997, 55/14 of 3 November 2000, 55/285 of 7 September 2001, 56/509 of 8 July 2002, 57/300 of 20 December 2002 and 57/301 of 13 March 2003.

² See resolution 55/2.

4. In carrying out the assessment of the debate on the annual report of the Security Council called for in resolution 51/241, annex, paragraph 12, the President shall inform the General Assembly of his decision regarding the need for further consideration of the Security Council report, including in respect of the convening of informal consultations, on the need for, and content of, any action by the Assembly based on the debate, as well as on any matters to be brought to the attention of the Security Council.
5. The President of the General Assembly should continue to be briefed regularly by the President of the Security Council on the work of the Council. The President of the Assembly may wish to inform Member States about the substantive issues raised during these meetings.
6. The Presidents of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council should meet together periodically with a view to ensuring increased cooperation, coordination and complementarity of the work programmes of the three organs in accordance with their respective responsibilities under the Charter. In this connection, the President of the Security Council may wish to discuss the plans of the Security Council for thematic debates with the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Economic and Social Council. The President of the Assembly will inform Member States about the outcome of these meetings.
7. In June of each year, the President-elect of the General Assembly, after taking into account the views provided by Member States and following consultations with the incumbent President and the Secretary-General, will suggest an issue, or issues, of global concern upon which Member States will be invited to comment during the general debate at the forthcoming session of the Assembly. The views provided by Member States should also be summarized and circulated to Member States. Such suggestions regarding the issue(s) for comment will be without prejudice to the sovereign right of Member States to solely and entirely determine the content of their general debate statements.
8. The work and decisions of the General Assembly should be better publicized. Accordingly, the support provided by the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat for these purposes should be intensified and strengthened. The Secretary-General is requested to present a plan to this end, within existing resources, to the next session of the Committee on Information, so that recommendations can be made to the Assembly.
9. Member States and the Secretariat should consider initiatives that might be taken for better monitoring of the follow-up of resolutions of the General Assembly, such as the provision of timely inputs for reports of the Secretary-General and giving effect to proposals that would advance the follow-up of major United Nations conferences and summits.
10. The resources available to the Office of the President of the General Assembly in personnel and other support shall be augmented from within existing resources, bearing in mind the provisions of paragraph 22 of the annex to resolution 55/285. Five additional posts shall be made available to supplement current support, of which three shall be filled on an annual basis, following consultations with the incoming President, beginning at the fifty-ninth session of the Assembly.
11. Transitional office accommodation and other support shall be provided to the President-elect of the General Assembly. The Secretary-General is requested to make the necessary arrangements for the provision of such support, within existing

resources, beginning with the President-elect of the fifty-ninth session of the Assembly.

B. Improving the working methods of the General Assembly

The working methods of the General Assembly need to be further rationalized in order to improve its efficiency and effectiveness and to make its outcomes more productive. Towards this end:

1. The General Committee shall meet throughout the session and further improve its working methods to increase its efficiency and effectiveness. It will play the leading role in advising the General Assembly on the efficient organization, coordination and management of its work. In this connection, the Assembly will also consider proposals to reform the General Committee.
2. The work of the Main Committees of the General Assembly might benefit if it is scheduled over two substantive periods during the session. The rescheduling of the work of the Main Committees should not lead to additional costs, additional or longer meetings, or staggered work schedules of the Main Committees. With a view to enabling the Assembly to consider changes in this regard, with effect from the sixtieth session of the Assembly, the Secretary-General is requested to present, by 1 February 2004, various options for consideration by the General Committee, taking into account the requirements of the relevant intergovernmental bodies and the different locations of their meetings and the budget cycle. The General Committee shall hold open-ended discussions on the options presented by the Secretary-General before making recommendations to the Assembly for its decision by 1 July 2004.
3. The General Assembly will consider convening more interactive debates. At the beginning of each session, the General Committee, following recommendations from the President of the General Assembly, shall recommend to the Assembly a programme of, and format for, interactive debates during that session on items on its agenda.
4. With a view to better conceptualization of the content of the agenda of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General is requested to submit to the Assembly, for its consideration by 1 March 2004, an illustrative agenda of the Assembly, based on all the agenda items of the fifty-eighth session, organized around the priorities of the Organization for the period 2002–2005.³ The General Committee shall hold open-

³ For the priorities of the Organization for the period 2002–2005:

- (a) Maintenance of international peace and security;
- (b) Promotion of sustained economic growth and sustainable development in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and recent United Nations conferences;
- (c) Development of Africa;
- (d) Promotion of human rights;
- (e) Effective coordination of humanitarian assistance efforts;
- (f) Promotion of justice and international law;
- (g) Disarmament;
- (h) Drug control, crime prevention and combating international terrorism in all its forms and manifestations,

see paragraph 26 of the introduction to the medium-term plan for the period 2002–2005 (*Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 6 (A/55/6/Rev.1)*) adopted in resolution 55/234.

ended discussions on the illustrative agenda before making recommendations on the matter to the Assembly for its decision by 1 July 2004.

5. It would be advantageous for the General Assembly to have a shorter agenda to ensure the fullest discussion of all issues, so that its decisions may have greater impact. Accordingly, the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session, in consultation with the Secretary-General, and following consultations with concerned Member States, is requested to make proposals for the further biennialization, triennialization, clustering and elimination of items of the customary agenda of the Assembly for the consideration of the General Committee by 1 April 2004. The General Committee shall hold open-ended discussions on the proposals before making recommendations on the matter to the Assembly for its decision by 1 July 2004.

6. General Assembly resolutions should be more concise, focused and action-oriented. Where practical, more actions taken by the Assembly should be in the form of decisions. Preambular paragraphs in resolutions of the Assembly should normally be kept to the minimum.

7. The heavy volume of documentation that is submitted to the General Assembly for its consideration should be reduced. In this regard, the Secretary-General is requested to continue his efforts to make proposals to Member States for the consolidation of reports on related subjects in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 20 of resolution 57/300. The proposals on a shorter agenda should be accompanied by related proposals for a reduction in the volume of documentation.

8. The Main Committees of the General Assembly are bound by the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, although they have different practices and working methods. With a view to identifying best practices and working methods, and recognizing the ongoing efforts of the Main Committees to streamline their work, the Secretary-General, drawing on the experience of previous Chairmen of the Main Committees, is requested to submit a historical and analytical note on the practices and working methods of the Main Committees for the consideration of the General Committee by 1 April 2004. The General Committee shall hold open-ended discussions on the note before making recommendations on the matter to the Assembly for its decision by 1 July 2004.

9. In accordance with paragraph 2 (a) and (c) of resolution 56/509, the General Assembly elects the President of the Assembly, the Vice-Presidents of the Assembly, and the Chairmen of the Main Committees at least three months before the opening of the session in which they will serve. In order to foster better advance planning and preparation of the work of the Main Committees, the full Bureaux of the Main Committees shall similarly be elected three months in advance of the next session.


UNITED NATIONS **GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**REVITALISATION OF THE WORK OF
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

SECOND INFORMAL NOTE

A. INTRODUCTION

1. This Second Informal Note builds on the first Note (Annex I) circulated by the President of the General Assembly on 15 October 2003, with a view to advancing work, and taking decisions on matters relating to the revitalisation of the General Assembly.

2. The first Informal Note, prepared as a background paper for open-ended plenary consultations on 17 October 2003, provided a review and assessment of more than a decade of revitalisation initiatives. Taken together, these initiatives touched upon the broad range of revitalisation issues. The Note also proposed a framework in which existing decisions and new proposals on revitalisation might be considered, and provided a non-exhaustive list of issues member states might consider in this context.

B. OPEN-ENDED INFORMAL PLENARY CONSULTATIONS

3. The open-ended informal plenary consultations, coming shortly before the opening of the debate in Plenary on 27 October 2003 on the of the cluster of items which included item 55: "Revitalisation of the work of the General Assembly", provided the opportunity for an important preliminary exchange of views on the issues.

4. The informal consultations were well attended. Delegations engaged in a frank and open exchange on the reform issue, and in particular, offered their views on the President's Informal Note, which they considered to be a good basis to begin consultations. The President was encouraged by, and commented on, the positive approach member states had taken to the consultations, an indication that they were evidently determined to make progress on the critical issue of revitalisation of the General Assembly.

C. PLENARY DEBATE ON ITEM 55: REVITALISATION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

5. Member states demonstrated their active interest in, and commitment to, the revitalisation of the General Assembly in the Plenary debate that took place 27-28 October 2003, when the revitalisation issue was discussed in a cluster of reform issues including Item 57: *United Nations Reform: measures and proposals*; Item 58: *Restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields*; and Item 59: *Strengthening of the United Nations System: Reports of the Secretary General*.

6. Some sixty-one delegations participated in the debate, to articulate their views on issues including: cooperation between the General Assembly and the Security Council; strengthening the Office of the President; the role of the General Committee; issues relating to the Main Committees; the possible inclusion of civil society in the work of the Assembly; and programme implementation and effectiveness, including the implementation of resolutions.

7. The President provided his assessment of the debate on Item 55 on 31 October 2003 (**Annex II**). He was pleased, overall, that many of the issues raised in the debate had also been identified in the first Informal Note, an encouraging sign that he had appropriately captured [reflected] the views of member states on salient issues concerning revitalisation of the General Assembly. The debate also served to confirm that revitalisation of the Assembly was an urgent and important issue for member states.

8. The President had indicated, in his first Informal Note, that he would appoint Facilitators to assist him in the revitalisation exercise. He took the opportunity, during his assessment of the debate, to announce the names of the six Permanent Representatives he had appointed. They are:

1. H.E. Mr Abdallah Baali, Permanent Representative of **Algeria**
2. H.E. Mr Stafford O. Neil, Permanent Representative of **Jamaica**
3. H.E. Mr Dirk Jan van der Berg, Permanent Representative of the **Netherlands**
4. H.E. Mr Kishore Mahbubani, Permanent Representative of **Singapore**

5. H.E. Mr Roman Kirn, Permanent Representative of **Slovenia**
6. H.E. Mr Dumisani Shadrack Kamulo, Permanent Representative of **South Africa**

9. The President also indicated that he would present to a resolution on Revitalisation of the Work of the General Assembly before the substantive part of the Fifty-eighth session concludes in December 2003.

D. THE NEXT STEPS

10. The overall framework for action outlined in the 15 October 2003 Informal Note appears to have been broadly accepted by Member States. It will be recalled that this framework groups revitalisation issues into two clusters:

- 1) Enhancing the authority and role of the General Assembly; and**
- 2) Improving the working methods of the General Assembly.**

At the same time, it was recognised that the two clusters of issues are substantively linked.

11. The next steps in the revitalisation process have now been considered, drawing on the contents of the first Informal Note, the comments made in the open-ended informal plenary consultations, the statements made in the plenary debate on Item 55, and the President's assessment of that debate delivered on 31 October 2003.

12. In considering a framework moving the revitalisation exercise forward and for taking decisions on concrete and implementable outcomes in a systematic way, it would be important to begin by identifying areas and possible elements that might eventually form the basis of a Working Text for negotiation.

13. Convergence of agreement among Member States is evident on a number of the salient issues that have emerged, some of which have overwhelming support. Such issues might be agreed at this stage, and might be included in the Working Text. A determination might then be made on the course of action to be taken to bring to conclusion other issues needing further review and discussion before decisions are taken.

14. It would be important to this exercise for member states to reaffirm that the revitalisation of the General Assembly must be addressed under the two clusters proposed. For ease of reference, salient areas and elements that have emerged to date are presented below for the further consideration of Member States, under the two clusters of issues proposed in the first Informal Note. Elements that may be considered for inclusion in the Working Text are attached as **Annex III**.

(i) Enhancing the authority and role of the General Assembly

- a) The central position of the General Assembly as the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative organ of the United Nations and the need to take the action necessary to enable it to carry out its responsibilities more effectively
- b) The relationship between the General Assembly and the Security Council, including areas of complementarity between the two organs
- c) The relationship between the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and other principal organs of the General Assembly
- d) The role of the Presidency of the Assembly, including in relationship to other organs and entities of the United Nations system
- e) Strengthening the Office of the President
- f) Advocacy measures that should be taken in respect of the work and decisions of the General Assembly so that they can be more widely known
- g) Action that might be taken at the national, regional and international levels for the implementation of resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly
- h) Ensuring democratic decision-making and restoration of the principles of Article 18 of the Charter

(ii) Improving the working methods of the General Assembly

- a) Using the General Committee more effectively
- b) Scheduling the work of the General Assembly over a longer period during the Session

- c) The nature and function of the Plenary of the Assembly
- d) A possible thematic approach to the work of the Assembly
- e) Reducing the length of the Assembly's agenda
- f) The further clustering, triennialization and biennialization of agenda items
- g) Rationalising the work of the Main Committees
- h) The significant volume of documentation requested and prepared on behalf of the Assembly.

E. PROCESS OF CONSULTATIONS

15. If delegations are in a position to indicate that the general approach outlined above seems acceptable, the President will request the Facilitators to conduct consultations on this basis. The cooperation of Member States in the consultations the Facilitators will undertake on behalf of the President is critical to the satisfactory outcome of our work in this important area. The President would urge member states to engage in a dynamic and open process with the Facilitators for this purpose.

**UN Headquarters
12 November 2003**