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**Statement of H.E. Mr. Julian Robert Hunte,  
President of the 58th Session of the General Assembly,  
at the Foreign Press Centre**

It has been said that today we live in a global village. I believe this. I also believe that the media continues to make a distinct contribution to the transformation from world to village, by breaking down barriers to knowledge and information - of peoples, of places and of events. I therefore value the opportunity this press conference affords me to share some perspectives on United Nations reform with members of the media, here at this Foreign Press Centre in Tokyo.

The United Nations has undergone dramatic changes in its nearly sixty-years. It has seen its membership increase by nearly four hundred percent - from 51 in 1945 to 191 today. The preponderance of countries referred to as "the North" has given way to the significant majority of countries referred to as "the South".

To Charter organs such as the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, the United Nations has added new organs, institutions, committees and commissions, to keep pace with the times and the broad range of issues which it now addresses.

The United Nations has stood in the midst of sweeping changes taking place in the world - geopolitical, economic and social developments, conflict and war and the technological revolution - all of which now make the world a different place from what it was in 1945, or even in 1956 when Japan joined the institution. So, after sixty years, does the United Nations need to be reformed and revitalized? I say yes, it does; I expect that this opinion is widely shared.

Initiatives for United Nations reform and revitalization, however, are not new. The General Assembly has discussed its own revitalization since 1999, when it included an item on this matter in its agenda. It contemplated reform of the Security Council in 1979, and since 1993, an Open-ended Working Group on the "Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council" has annually considered the reform issue.

There are other reform initiatives underway, for example, in the economic and social fields. And we are all familiar with the Panel of Eminent Persons that United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan established last year to, "Examine today's international threats, provide analysis of future challenges and recommend the changes necessary to ensure effective joint action". You might say, then, that the buzz of reform and revitalization at the United Nations could be moving from a whisper to a roar.

Why such intense focus on revitalization and reform of the United Nations, and why now? I believe we can gain some insights if we reflect on the progression of the United Nations and how it is responding to contemporary global challenges. After six decades of institution building, most will agree that new institutions were not always placed in the context of pre-existing structures; rather they were designed to deal with the issue at hand. Therefore, the sum of the parts falls short of a coherent, results-oriented whole.

Iraq must also be taken into account. Without commenting on the decision of the coalition to take military action in Iraq, I can say that at the United Nations, there was concern that the Security Council had not played a determining role in events leading up to the military action. When the Council did not act decisively - to support or oppose the military action - the General Assembly was unable to decide to meet to take a position on the matter.

At that stage, there were clear voices questioning the relevance of the United Nations, which thankfully have quieted somewhat now. But the disquiet remains about the implications for international law of concepts such as preventive or pre-emptive action - a significant evolution if taken in the context of the Charter and international law. There are strong undercurrents that a parallel system of enforcement operating outside the provisions of the United Nations Charter, should not develop.

Then, there is the approaching sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations in 2005. There is broad consensus that the Event foreseen by the Assembly in 2005 to review the implementation of the Millennium Declaration; the integrated follow-up to United Nations summits and conferences in the economic and social fields; and the biennial review of the Monterrey Consensus, adopted by the High-Level Conference on Financing for Development in 2002 - should be at the highest level.

Also, the Assembly should receive from the Secretary-General recommendations for its consideration about a new architecture for the United Nations in the areas of peace and security, which the Panel would have presented to him. Japan, we know, favours a Summit Meeting to take decisions regarding the United Nations Millennium Declaration, including in the areas of peace and security.

With so much at stake, it stands to reason that Member States would want to look at the health of the United Nations, and this, I believe is an important factor giving momentum to reform and revitalization, and for the progress we have made thus far in the Fifty-eighth session on these issues.

I am a strong supporter of multilateralism, a believer in a vibrant and relevant United Nations that is indispensable to international cooperation for economic and social progress, the promotion and protection of human rights and for the maintenance of international peace and security.

As President of the General Assembly, I am committed to moving forward the process of reform. The Chair of the Working Group on Security Council reform falls to me, and I also provide

leadership for the General Assembly revitalization process. I am pleased to say that Japan has been an important contributor to my revitalization initiatives.

I cite you General Assembly resolution 58/126, adopted last December as an important step in our efforts to address many of the criticisms leveled at the Assembly over the years. A shorter agenda to better focus debates, a reduction in documentation, a programme to make the Assembly's work and decisions more visible and better appreciated around the world, are significant aspects of this resolution. So too is the cooperation between the Presidents of the General Assembly and the Security Council and with the President of the Economic and Social Council for which there is now a framework. The resolution also touches on the important issue of General Assembly resolutions, a matter that will have to be developed further.

Taking all these considerations into account, I believe we are moving towards making the General Assembly function as it should, as the only universal body addressing the entire spectrum of global issues, and recognized by the Millennium Declaration as such.

Security Council reform, on the other hand, is complex, difficult and politically sensitive. The differing and well-defined positions of many Member States and groups of states have resulted in slow progress, and some would say, stalemate, in the Working Group. Yet, I sense that the majority of the membership wants progress on Security Council reform. I believe it essential, in the circumstances, to move away from competing packages, proposals and policies, and engage in a free flow and exchange of information and ideas, to determine if our common aspirations for Security Council reform could lead to common goals on which we might find consensus.

There is no doubt in my mind that enlarging the Council from its present size of 15 is a political imperative, if it is to continue to command the international respect essential to operate with maximum effectiveness. I have discerned a trend in favour of enlarging the Council between 24-26 seats, but it is a trend, not a consensus. Some members have yet to pronounce themselves on the issue, while others may still believe that a Council of 24-26 is too large. I hope that some movement will be brought about on this issue in the coming months.

Other key issues impacting reform of the Security Council may prove to be more intractable. Should new permanent seats be created, and if so, who should take those seats? Should they have the veto extended to them? The question has also been asked about the status of some of the present permanent members, in the context of a possible "European Seat", rather than national seats. The veto is particularly contentious - many Member States are unwilling to see this privilege extended further. No consensus is emerging on these issues.

There is no magic formula for Security Council reform, but I am encouraging the membership to give impetus to the process, to narrow differences and even establish a framework for consideration that might contribute to decisive progress during the Sixtieth Anniversary,

We know of Japan's particular interest in Security Council reform. Japan is the second economic power in the world. It is the largest contributor of official development assistance (ODA). It is the

second largest contributor to both the regular and peacekeeping budgets of the United Nations. It has dispatched self-defence force contingents, civilian police officers, cease fire observers and elections monitors to take part in various peacekeeping missions under the flag of the United Nations. I have no doubt that Member States will take these factors into account in their conclusions on Security Council reform.

I wish to make one final point. The United Nations does not stay reformed once reforms are introduced. Reform is an ongoing process. The organization needs a strategy; indeed, a programme for constant review and improvement; an agenda for the management of change, if you wish, that would help it to keep up with global challenges. Member States of the United Nations are themselves agents of change and, I believe, will rise to the challenge of ensuring that the organization is able to carry out its Charter functions.

I thank you.