

2 June 2004

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

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Press:

As President of the Fifty-eighth session of the United Nations General Assembly, I am indeed pleased to be here in Vienna, an important United Nations Headquarters city and here at the United Nations Office at Vienna (UNOV). The agencies hosted here at UNOV are mandated to address a broad range of critical global issues: drugs and crime - particularly pressing issues for the countries of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM); atomic energy; industrial development and the ban on nuclear tests.

I took leadership of the United Nations General Assembly at a somber time in the life of the organization. Iraq hung like a dark and ominous cloud over the General Assembly and indeed the United Nations. Some were questioning the relevance of the organization. The General Assembly had remained outside the discussion on Iraq, and none seem to be sure why it had. The messages coming to me from the membership was clear - we must give the General Assembly back its role and authority as envisaged in the Charter, and focus attention on its development agenda.

Many made it clear that this was the time to work in earnest on revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, although there was obvious great reluctance to touch the matter of reform of the Security Council. Yet, all agreed that revitalization and reform were necessary. My own view was that any revitalization and reform initiative had to be directed towards reaffirming the United Nations relevance as the sole global organization that can take decisions on all issues on the international agenda, including the maintenance of peace and security. Revitalization and reform had to make the United Nations a more credible, a more representative and a more effective organization.

It was in this spirit that I took up the revitalization of the General Assembly and the reform of the Security Council, presiding over the Assembly's deliberations on revitalization as President of the General Assembly and on Council reform as Chair of the Open-ended Working Group on Reform of the Security Council. Definite progress has been made in respect of the revitalization of the General Assembly, in response to the demand of Member States that it be strengthened and returned to the preeminent role in respect of international policy setting and coordination envisaged for it in the Charter.

I saw our role in the revitalization initiative as providing leadership, ensuring that we seized every opportunity for collaboration and cooperation, and bringing to fruition issues on which

there was general agreement. The results of the Assembly's efforts, as you know, are contained in resolution 58/126 entitled, "Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly". Important measures are incorporated in that resolution.

Issues such as coordination and cooperation between the General Assembly and the Security Council; the reporting relationship of the Council to the Assembly, which is now more clearly defined; an enhanced position for the President of the Assembly, through the provision of resources for his office and by giving the opportunity to incoming Presidents to suggest an issue on which the annual General Debate might focus - are issues that have been decided in resolution 58/126.

Further, the Department of Public Information is enjoined to better publicise the work of the Assembly, after presenting a plan for this purpose. The Assembly will begin to hold more interactive debates; a more focussed, accessible and comprehensive agenda is to be presented, organized around broad themes based on the United Nations medium-term plan; consultations are yet ongoing on a shorter agenda and a reduction in the volume of documentation. Importantly, we are seeking to put our reform initiatives into a framework that would ensure that the Assembly continues on a dynamic path to revitalization.

The matter of Security Council reform has been more complex, but we have managed to move away from routine discussion of Clusters in which delegations year after year state their positions, without providing scope for any significant movement.

This session, we took out six critical issues for discussion, and this has helped to revitalize debate. Those six issues were:

Size of an enlarged Security Council;

Question of regional representation;

Criteria for membership;

Relationship between the General Assembly and the Security Council;

Accountability;

Use of the veto.

We also had an informative interactive discussion with the President of the Security Council, H.E. Mr. Munir Akrim of Pakistan and his colleague Council Members the Permanent Representatives of Brazil, France and Romania.

We are now giving consideration to the framework we will use to reflect the work the General Assembly's Open-ended Working Group has done on Security Council reform this session, and to date.

I hope that this short overview on revitalization of the General Assembly and reform of the Security Council provided you with some insight into our ongoing initiatives in these areas.

Thank you.