

# United Nations Nations Unies

THE PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

LE PRESIDENT DE L'ASSEMBLEE GENERALE

10 June 2004

## **Statement of H.E. Mr. Julian Robert Hunte, President of the 58th Session of the General Assembly, on the Election of the President of the 59<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly**

Mr. President-elect, Madam Deputy Secretary-General, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates:

It is my great pleasure, on behalf of the members of the General Assembly and on my own behalf, to congratulate the President-elect of the Fifty-ninth Session of the United Nations General Assembly, His Excellency Mr. Jean Ping, Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and la Francophonie of Gabon, on his election to this high office.

Our President-elect comes to this significant leadership position with attributes that will redound to the benefit of this General Assembly, and importantly, to the benefit of the world's peoples, in whose service the United Nations works. This is evident from his curriculum vitae, which is an impressive testament to his experience, dedication and accomplishments.

Mr. Ping has served his Government for more than three decades. The numerous portfolios he has held as Minister of the Government of Gabon in areas including economics, the environment and technology, fall within the spectrum of critical issues challenging the United Nations today. His experience and expertise in these areas no doubt prepares him to bring new insights and perspectives to the tasks at hand.

I have, as President of the Fifty-eighth session, approached the work of this Assembly with continuity firmly in mind, conscious that if the United Nations work is to advance and progress, we must continue to build a firm foundation for it. I therefore hope that the progress we are making this session will help make Mr. Ping's tenure, and importantly, your cooperation and collaboration with him both dynamic and far-reaching.

The Fifty-eighth Session of the General Assembly has to date been a demanding one, in which we have sought to advance the work of the organization in critical areas including economic and social development. We have dedicated much effort to revitalizing the work of this General Assembly, to better position it to carry out the role set out for it and the goal and objectives it is expected to accomplish on behalf of the people of the world, who are now more discerning and more articulate, and increasingly making their views known, including through organizations of civil society.

Concrete measures have been adopted in resolution 58/126 with a more focused, more effective Assembly in view. Forging a closer working relationship with the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, refocusing some of the Assembly's priorities and strengthening the

Office of the President of the Fifty-ninth and future sessions, are but some of the issues on which we have been able to agree this session.

Much work, however, remains to be done - a long list of critical issues, some long-standing, some current, and some unforeseen - will challenge the President and the membership during the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly in much the same way we were challenged during the Fifty-eighth session.

A pressing priority, for example, will be preparations for the 2005 high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly, for review of the integrated follow-up and implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields, including the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals. Urgent attention will have to be given to agreeing a date, format and the modalities for the high-level plenary meeting - there is only some 15 months left for preparation of this critical event.

The New Economic Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) has done much to deepen our understanding of the struggles the countries of the African continent are waging across a broad spectrum of challenges. Moreover, it points the way forward in addressing - and where possible preventing - conflicts and catastrophes and promoting systematic and sustainable development in Africa.

In its initiatives to further galvanize the Continent and to work with the Africa Union and with world support, the Assembly will have an asset in President-elect Ping, a "son of Africa". His experience and understanding would, I believe, be pivotal in the Assembly's cooperative efforts with Africa, as the Continent continues to chart the course of its own destiny, including advancing and implementing the objectives of NEPAD.

A majority of countries of the developing world continue to be challenged in today's rapidly changing global environment. It is important, I believe, that the United Nations continues to make space for focused consideration of matters that directly affect states or groups of states. I wish to refer here to the International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for Small Island Developing States (SIDS), to be held in Mauritius. The convening of this meeting, the success of which can make a significant contribution to the implementation of the MDGs, falls to the Presidency of the Fifty-ninth session.

There are two additional 'works in progress' that I believe it important to mention here - the revitalization of the General Assembly and the reform of the Security Council. These are issues that will continue to benefit from, and test the leadership of, the President to accomplish positive outcomes with the cooperation of the membership. They are issues on which we must continue our efforts to forge consensus, even as we look forward to receiving, at the Fifty-ninth session, the recommendations of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change appointed by the Secretary-General. The broad remit of the Panel gives it scope to make recommendations that could contribute to the Assembly's initiatives both in respect of revitalization of the Assembly

and reform of the Security Council. I am sure that the recommendations of the Panel will receive the full and active consideration of this Assembly.

It is my goal, in the remaining months of the Fifty-eighth Session, to bring to safe harbour as many of the efforts, initiatives and issues we are currently addressing, so as to provide to chart a clear course to assist the forthcoming session to sail as far, as well, and as smoothly as possible.

On behalf of President-elect Ping and on my own behalf, let me thank you, the members of the General Assembly for the strong support and deep commitment you have given to the efforts that we have made, and to progress yet to be made. Let me also thank the Secretariat, and particularly the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management, for their partnership in our work.

In my acceptance speech upon my election as President of the Fifty-ninth Session of the General Assembly in July 2004, I pledged my full commitment to the work of the General Assembly and of the United Nations. Today, I again make a pledge - to do all I can to assist President-elect Ping, and to ensure a smooth transition and handover of the Presidency in September, as the General Assembly anticipated when it determined that the President of the forthcoming session should be elected in advance. I know that I can count on your support, and that you join me in wishing Mr. Ping every success.

Thank you.