

15 April 2009

**Statement of Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann,
President of the 63rd Session of the General Assembly,
on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly**

Delivered by H.E. Raymond Wolfe, Vice President of the General Assembly

Excellencies,

I have the honour to open this session by reading the message of the President of the General Assembly, who is traveling to promote the success of the upcoming June conference and regrets that he cannot be with us in person. It reads:

I am pleased that Member States now take up the issue of the revitalization of the General Assembly and I wish to express my confidence that your informal negotiations will be particularly productive under the able leadership of my two facilitators – H.E. Maria Fernanda Espinosa, the Permanent Representative of Ecuador, and H.E. Morten Wetland of Norway – who have been diligently preparing for the work ahead. With your participation, I trust we will make real progress in efforts to reassert the Assembly's responsibilities as the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative organ of the United Nations.

As you know, the revitalization and democratization of the United Nations are the overarching priorities of my presidency. Each Member State has a vote in the Assembly, and this makes it a unique forum within the international community. But until the Assembly restores the authority assigned to it under the Charter, our democracy will fall short of exercising the real leadership that the world requires at this critical juncture in history. It is imperative to reestablish the balance among the principle organs of our Organization and to reassure that the mandates assigned to each of these organs in the Charter are fully respected. This is what I see as the ultimate goal of this process of revitalization.

This process is well underway but must come up with concrete results. To accelerate our work, my predecessor wisely established the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the General Assembly to, among other things, identify ways to further enhance the role, authority and effectiveness and efficiency of the Assembly. The resulting report, which we adopted last December, provides us with an overview of the recommendations and changes that have been made over the past 16 years of reform efforts.

We now must move ahead on the recommendations that will improve our working methods and efficiency and further streamline our work.

I think that we have clear opportunities to improve the exchange between the General Assembly and other organs of the United Nations and the broader UN family of organizations.

I have perceived a sense of isolation in the specialized agencies, funds and programmes of the UN system in my contacts with colleagues from other duty stations. We would all benefit from briefings to the Assembly itself and could undoubtedly contribute to the important work they are doing. Let us find opportunities to host these exchanges so that they can be both informal, candid and provide real added value to our work.

We all agree that the procedures for selecting the Secretary-General should be formalized. The Secretariat is an enormously important organ of the United Nations and the Secretary-General should be selected in a transparent and inclusive process. Let us resolve to put into place procedures for timely review of candidates well before the next election. There are many resolutions cited in the report that will help us put together procedures and define important parameters for the position, including term length and possible re-election.

I am also inspired by the enthusiastic response to the Assembly's high-level dialogues that are being convened on an increasingly regular basis. During the sixty-third session alone, we have had timely discussions on the Special Needs of Africa, the Millennium Development Goals, on South-South cooperation, the international financial crisis, on the right to education in crisis situations, the global food crisis and the right to food, with more to come on the unemployment crisis, and renewable energies.

So many country representatives, especially those with small staffs, have told me that these debates are essential to bringing them up-to-date on complex issues that require informed responses. Even more important, they put these key but sometimes neglected issues higher on the international agenda and contribute to action-oriented policy and operational decisions affecting the lives of millions around the world.

The Assembly has demonstrated new agility in taking up urgent issues before us by drawing on the enormous reservoirs of expertise that exist within the UN system, as well as bringing into the body experts working in the field. No country alone can convene such diverse experts from around the world in such a timely manner. We must continue to seize these moments and organize meaningful and action-oriented responses.

I believe the Conference on the Economic and Financial Crisis and Its impact on Development that the Assembly has decided to convene during the first three days of June has the potential to be one of the most important events in the history of the United Nations. We grow stronger when we act with such resolve and timeliness in the face of extraordinary crises.

Let us be practical in our response to the concrete recommendations for revitalization before us, including the smaller changes that are needed. In the interest of Assembly Presidents to come. I hope, for example, that more resources are made available to the Office of the President so that it can rely not only on adequate staffing, but also simple yet critical resources such as a designated conference room

for staff meetings and to receive visitors, as well as a press office to work more effectively in promoting the work of the General Assembly.

This General Assembly is changing. It is transforming itself from a group of individual States jockeying for power and influence into a community of nations, an Assembly that can respond to urgent global needs with coherence and solidarity. We must keep in check the shortsighted impulse to promote narrow national interests over the greater common good, and endeavor as a body to fulfill the noble purposes for which our Organization was founded. In doing so we will conserve the relevancy of this Assembly in the international arena. This will be the real measure of our vitality and of our resolve to provide the dynamic leadership that is now expected of us. I am confident we will succeed and I look forward to the fruits of your labour on this issue.

Thank you.