

23 November 2011

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser,
President of the 66th Session of the General Assembly,
at an event marking the Meeting of the Forum of Small States (FOSS)**

Ambassador Albert Chua
Distinguished Colleagues
Excellencies

I thank you for inviting me to this meeting for exchange of views with members of the Forum of Small States at the United Nations. FOSS had always been an open, interactive forum for dialogue and frank exchange in which I had personally joined in the past. My being with you for the second time since taking over as the President speaks for my special recognition of this deliberative forum.

For the last two decades, FOSS has not only expanded its membership and its energetic diversity but at the same has also gained credibility for its contribution to advancing the agenda of the United Nations in a positive direction. Here I would like to pay tribute to the role played by our good friend Ambassador Vanu Menon in effectively leading FOSS to this position. I wish his successor Ambassador Chua all success in carrying his work forward.

Before I share my thoughts on the on-going UNGA session, let me underscore two points.

First, FOSS members may be small in the sizes of their population but they never are small in terms of ideas and initiatives or in terms of dynamism of their human resources.

Second, I also believe that being small generates among its members a sense of solidarity, empathy and compassion which are essential for our world body to make progress in its global mission. These countries face all kinds of vulnerabilities in their individual context and that make them appreciative of the value of mutual support and collaboration.

As in other years, the 66th session of the General Assembly has its usual challenges and complexities. I have continued the serious efforts that have been made during last years to streamline the work of the Assembly and its Main Committees. My own efforts in this direction have been essentially consultative both with the member states as well as the Secretary General and his team.

As you know, many delegations welcomed the role of mediation as the theme of this year's general debate and reflected on the increasing role of mediation and prevention in the settlement of disputes. You also know that I have identified four themes to be the main pillars of my Presidency. In this regard, I have been also encouraging the meaningful efforts that contribute to advancing the GA agenda

parallelly in these four areas. As PGA, I intend to intervene in any area for the effective and efficient completion of the mandated work at hand.

Another area of my special attention has been to engage in dialogue and exchanges with civil society since the commencement of my Presidency. I believe the agenda of the General Assembly stand to benefit immensely from such interaction.

Coming back to the work of the Assembly and its Committees, I believe that progress so far has been smooth, barring a few including the issue of the EU speaking slots. On this particular issue, when parties approached me, I provided the guidance that the matter should be resolved through the established rules of procedure as well as exercising flexibility.

The First and the Fourth Committees had already concluded their work. The Third concluded yesterday. The Second and Sixth are a bit behind schedule. The biggest challenge is, of course, the Fifth Committee with the biennium budget and the scale principles on its plate. As the budget is a time-bound item, our focus should be to get it approved by consensus before mid-December. I am meeting the Chair of the Committee and subsequently with the main negotiating groups to help them attain this deadline.

Let me now share with you some of the highlights of the 66th session so far.

The first-ever high level meeting on desertification was a substantive gathering of the Assembly and I presented the Chair's Summary subsequently to the conference of state-parties of the Convention on Desertification in the Republic of Korea on 14 October.

The high-level meeting on non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in September was the second-ever high-level meeting to address a health issue, - the first one on HIV/AIDS in 2001. The adopted Political Declaration calls on Member States to adopt a set of voluntary global targets for NCDs by the end of 2012. WHO has been tasked with setting up a comprehensive global monitoring framework.

This was followed by another high-level meeting devoted to commemorating 10th anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA).

In addition to its regular items, the First Committee focussed on the revitalization of the disarmament machinery in particular the stalemate at the Conference on Disarmament, though with not much progress. With a busy 2012 agenda of meetings on disarmament, including a UN Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty and a review of the UN Program of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, I intend to undertake extensive consultations with all interested parties aiming at tangible progress.

During last two days, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) convened a member-states Forum in Vienna to consider how the experience of Nuclear-Weapons-Free Zones in several regions of the world could be relevant to the Middle East. I have assigned a senior expert of my Office to participate on my behalf.

On the peacekeeping issue, one area of my concern is the safety and security of peacekeeping personnel – uniformed and civilian – which must be a top priority for all involved: the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Secretariat; I believe that there is a need to work closely with host countries of UN Missions.

For the items in the Second Committee, admittedly, sustainable development is especially vital for Small States. Rio+20 process has been receiving my particular attention. I am also personally participating in a number of related events with a view to advancing broader agreement at Rio. I will be convening a retreat on 17 and 18 December to encourage broader agreement on Rio+20 outcome. In this context, operationalization of the Green Climate Fund, I believe, has to answer first the crucial question of how the funding arrangement will link up with the new adaptation and technology institutions. I would welcome any ideas on the Rio+20 issues from the FOSS members.

At this session the Third Committee experienced a reflection of the Arab awakening in its work, particularly in the area of human rights. It was also reflected in the resolution on Women and political participation. The Committee adopted yesterday a country-specific resolution in one of the first successful actions against the violation of human rights in Syria. The Arab countries played an instrumental role in that regard.

A forward-looking resolution in the Third adopted by consensus was on Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against persons, based on religion or belief, which was tabled by Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in place of the polarizing resolution on “defamation of religion” of the past years.

In the Sixth Committee, the UN and ICC relationship has attracted attention of all as more specific cases are being referred to ICC by the Security Council. I believe until necessary supplementary arrangements and agreements are concluded, we must continue to fully support the role of ICC in bringing justice and comply with the spirit and the letter of the current Relationship Agreement, especially in cases referred to by the Council. Also, voluntary contributions are helpful and support the ICC in carrying its mandate. I welcome the fact that the Kampala Declaration (June 2010) secured the agreement of ICC State Parties to the “Crime of Aggression” definition and conditions under which the ICC exercises jurisdiction, after nearly one decade of negotiations.

During my visit to Japan, I attended the Tokyo Dialogue on the Security Council Reform on 14 November. The deliberations were rich and substantive. I hope the ideas coming out of that meeting would contribute to the discussions of the first intergovernmental meeting on 28 November under my Presidency on this issue.

As you know, recently I and the Secretary General made a brief visit to Libya which is facing tremendous challenges in the post-Qaddafi period. The people of Libya need international community’s support for capacity development, for humanitarian needs and for infusion of financial liquidity to bring stability and benefits to common people. I convened a briefing meeting on this joint visit to Libya on 10 November, followed by the informal plenary of the GA on the outcome of the G-20 summit in Cannes.

On the Middle East issues, I believe that we need to be guided by the principles enshrined in the UN Charter and in that context; the right of self determination of Palestine and its legitimate right of statehood needs to be asserted. I also believe that it is the responsibility of the UN system to act according to the Charter principles.

I thank you for your attention and would welcome your thoughts, ideas and suggestions on various issues that I shared with you, particularly on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly.

Let us now have a good exchange of views.