

11 October 2012

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Vuk Jeremić,
President of the 67th Session of the General Assembly,
on Agenda Items 115 and 116: “Implementation of the Resolutions of
the United Nations” and “Revitalization of the Work of the General
Assembly”**

Excellencies,

I welcome this opportunity to address you at the start of the debate on how to further strengthen the authority of the General Assembly.

This is the only body where all countries come together as sovereign equals to advance the aims of the UN Charter. To be able to meet the expectations of humanity, we must continue with the process of revitalizing and modernizing it.

Excellencies,

The topic we are focusing on today is not a new one. As early as in 1948, the General Assembly recognized for the first time the need to adapt to changing circumstances. Near the end of the 3rd Session in fact, one day after the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted an additional item was placed on the agenda of the plenary. It called for the creation of an “Ad Hoc Committee to consider methods and procedures which would enable the General Assembly to discharge its functions more effectively and expeditiously.”

Decades later, we continue to try to make headway in what has always been understood as a work in progress. So let me begin by thanking His Excellency Alexander Lomaia, Permanent Representative of Georgia, and Her Excellency Susan Waffa-Ogoo, Permanent Representative of Gambia, for leading the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the General Assembly during the 66th Session.

Its report classified as A/66/891 together with resolution A/RES/66/294 adopted by consensus on the final day of the previous session, will guide our deliberations over the next year.

Excellencies,

For the first time, the two agenda items being discussed today have been scheduled to immediately follow the Secretary-General’s report on the work of the Organization. This was done to highlight their importance for the General Assembly.

I believe it is critical for the Member States to consistently implement that which has already been agreed in this chamber. This should be a core principle of effective multilateralism in the 21st century.

Excellencies,

During this session, the Ad Hoc Working Group is mandated to review the inventory of General Assembly resolutions on revitalization, and to issue an updated version in its report to the plenary.

It is my sincere hope that the findings of the review will suggest that we are moving in the right direction.

So far, we have made some progress in a number of areas of revitalization and, as President, I will work tirelessly to ensure that the process is further enhanced.

I have already begun to build closer relationships with the other principal organs of the United Nations. I have started to exchange views with the Secretary-General, the Presidents of the Security Council and ECOSOC, and the Heads of various UN Entities and Specialized Agencies, as well as with the Chairs of the Main Committees.

Yesterday, in fact, I met with this last group. I thanked those in attendance for their commitment to our shared goals, and reiterated my belief that their deliberations are critical to advancing the plenary's agenda.

Excellencies,

Over the past several years, there have been developments in the institutional aspects of revitalization.

The increasing number of informal thematic debates and high-level events has contributed to the relevance of this body in addressing a growing number of global issues. As mandated by resolution 66/294, I will consult with Member States on the topics to be discussed, with a view to achieving results-oriented outcomes.

As President I will continue the tradition established by my predecessors, and convene informal meetings of the plenary before and after G-20 preparatory meetings, as well as the annual Heads of State or Government Summit.

In my view, however, we should work on increasing the complementarity of both policies and actions between the UN and key international economic players.

It is with this in mind that I have proposed to launch a process leading to the establishment of an effective consultative framework between the General Assembly and international financial and trade institutions, as well as groupings such as the G-20.

I believe that if we do this in the right way, the key actors' decisions can actually help strengthen and further revitalize the General Assembly.

Excellencies,

The issue before us today has been on the General Assembly's agenda for decades, and some breakthroughs have been achieved.

But I believe that much more will need to be done.

Let us take a step back for a moment, and consider the overall context in which the process of revitalization is taking place.

Whether in the political, economic, or technological realm, the world is becoming increasingly unpredictable and volatile. The overall scope and rapidity of the transformations we face are unknown in the annals of history. This global trend is likely to continue well into the future.

The speed of the changes taking place outside these walls is increasingly outpacing the tempo of changes we are able to agree upon in this building.

To retain the capacity to change the world for the better, we will need to find the strength to keep changing ourselves.

I'm afraid that we are confronted with the choice of either adapting to the new times, or simply being left behind to watch the gap between our duties and our capabilities widen by the day.

I am not advocating haste or revolution, but I am trying to instill a sense of urgency.

I have tremendous faith in the United Nations. It is no doubt the greatest humanist project of the 20th century. I firmly believe this greatness should extend well into the 21st.

But it's not going to come by default. Bold action is needed.

It is up to the Member States and Member States only to propose and decide how to move forward. I was elected to serve them to serve you and I pledge my unwavering commitment to their endeavors.

I believe we all are in favor of revitalizing, and thereby strengthening, the authority of the General Assembly. Yet as the 19th century Scottish social commentator Thomas Carlyle succinctly put it, "conviction is worthless unless it is converted into conduct."

So let us conduct ourselves with the courage of our convictions. Let us revitalize this institution so that it remains, in the words of the Charter, the "center for harmonizing the actions of nations."

Thank you for your attention.