

29 August 2013

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Vuk Jeremić,
President of the 67th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Plenary to Consider the Report of the Ad Hoc Working Group
on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly**

Excellencies,
Distinguished Colleagues,

We have gathered to review the deliberations and endorse the findings of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the General Assembly.

During the 67th Session, it has been ably chaired by my good friend, H.E. Ambassador Mootaz Ahmadein Khalil, the distinguished Permanent Representative of Egypt—one of the most skillful diplomats I have ever had the pleasure to work with.

At the onset of my remarks, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to him and his colleagues for their dedication in the endeavor to enhance the role, authority, effectiveness, and efficiency of the General Assembly.

Excellencies,

The Report of the Working Group summarizes the results of the six sessions that were held over the past few months. Substantive discussions were divided into two parts: a general debate and exchange of views, followed by a series of meetings that addressed a number of specific issues, organized around four thematic clusters defined by the Chair.

The first focused on the role and authority of the General Assembly and its relationship with the other principal organs of the United Nations, as well as other groups and organizations outside the UN system.

Particular emphasis was placed on the importance of making better use of the Assembly's vast prerogatives under the Charter, especially as they relate to establishing more complementarity with the Security Council on matters related to peacekeeping, and with ECOSOC on advancing the post-2015 sustainable development agenda.

The Working Group also underscored the importance of deepening the relationship with informal intergovernmental groupings, in part based on the provisions contained in a landmark resolution adopted by consensus on July 9th, entitled the "UN and Global Economic Governance." By establishing the General Assembly as the preeminent venue for regularized interaction between the

G20 and UN Member States, the foundation has been laid upon which coordination on global economic, financial, and trade issues can be built up in the time ahead.

Excellencies,

The second cluster of topics that were taken up by the Working Group related to significant technical matters, such as working methods, implementation of resolutions, and agenda streamlining, in addition to consideration of options for more time-conscious and secure balloting in the plenary and in the main committees, including the selection of committee chairs.

Attention was also paid to the question of thematic debates, and I welcome the fact that today's resolution on revitalization "recognizes the value of holding interactive inclusive thematic debates on current issues of critical importance to the international community, and invites the President of the General Assembly to continue this practice."

I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to Member States for having participated in such high numbers in such events during the 67th Session. I believe each of them has helped to advance the process of revitalization, demonstrating the singular convening power of the General Assembly. Key subjects included the Role of International Criminal Tribunals in Reconciliation, the UN in Global Economic Governance, Peaceful Resolution of Conflicts in Africa, Sustainable Development and Climate Change, Culture and Development, Entrepreneurship for Development, Education for Youth, and Inequality.

In less than a fortnight, I will convene the final thematic debate of the 67th Session, on the Role of Credit Rating Agencies in the International Financial System. The occasion will provide the General Assembly with an unprecedented opportunity to engage with leading international experts, academics, senior executives of the Agencies themselves, as well as of other financial entities. We will be able to take stock of the reform measures already undertaken, and discuss additional ones that may be necessary to implement in order to establish a more objective and reliable rating system that can benefit the international community as a whole.

Excellencies,

The third cluster of issues that fell under the purview of the Working Group revolved around a consideration of the role and responsibility of the General Assembly in the selection and appointment of the Secretary-General and other executive heads within the UN system.

As the Group's Report underscores, a more inclusive and transparent process, involving the General Assembly at earlier stages, mindful of the terms contained in Article 97 of the Charter and respecting Resolution 11 (I), as well as other relevant documents. This would enable the entire membership to be apprised of the views of perspective candidates, helping them to make informed choices and provide timely feedback to the other principal organs of the United Nations.

The fourth cluster included an examination of the functions of the Office of the President of the General Assembly. These included how to strengthen its institutional memory, conduct a more effective transition between term-holders, enhance its relationship with the Secretariat, develop options on how to increase the number of assigned permanent UN staff to the Office, and address the manifest inadequacy of the budgetary apportionment, which has not increased since 1998.

Allow me to express my sincere gratitude to the Member States which have contributed to the Trust Fund in Support of the OPGA since its establishment in March 2010. This, however, should not be seen as an optimal solution to chronic underfunding. I would therefore like to extend an appeal to the General Assembly to consider raising the allotment for the Office, in the context of forthcoming deliberations on the Organization's regular budget.

I strongly believe that no country, in deciding whether to contend for the post of PGA, should be constrained by the possible financial implications of a successful candidacy, and respectfully urge the Assembly to take appropriate action to level the fiscal playing field.

Excellencies,

We have taken a number of steps in revitalizing the world's sole universal body that operates on the basis of the sovereign equality of its members. I believe we should invest additional efforts in this endeavor with all deliberate speed.

We should aim to further empower the General Assembly, by ensuring the best possible use is made of its broad prerogatives, as provided by the UN Charter.

We must strive to reform the way the Assembly conducts its work, so it may come to play a leading role in 21st century global governance—one in which the advantages of effective multilateralism, framed by the adherence to accepted principles and norms in the conduct of international relations, are respected by all.

In 1945, the General Assembly was created to serve as the moral conscience of the international community. It was established as the democratic repository of the rights of all nations—large and small, developed and developing—to live in peace, security, and prosperity.

For decades, the great promise made by the UN's founders has not been fulfilled in its entirety.

A growing number of countries are coming together in their belief that a more effective, transparent and inclusive Assembly is an imperative for the 21st century. Revitalization holds the key to enabling this institution to set the agenda for a world in the midst of a profound strategic and environmental transformation, as the complex challenges we now face cannot be solved in isolation to one another.

Excellencies,

A little over a year ago, world leaders tasked the General Assembly with the primary responsibility for conceptualizing a universal transition to sustainability.

Whether it succeeds or fails will represent, in my view, the strategic litmus test of whether the revitalization of the General Assembly can be completed with the requisite boldness and foresight necessary for it to assume its rightful place at the helm of world affairs.

In September 1963, one of the greatest statesmen of the 20th century, John F. Kennedy, stepped up to the podium of the General Assembly for the second and final time—a mere two months before he was tragically assassinated in Dallas, Texas.

“My fellow inhabitants of this planet,” he said, “the effort to improve the conditions of man [...] is not a task for the few. It is the task of all nations, [...] for plague and pestilence, and plunder and pollution, the hazards of nature, and the hunger of children are the foes of every nation. The earth, the sea, and the air are the concerns of every nation. And science, technology, and education can be the ally of every nation. Never before has man had such capacity to control his own environment, to end thirst and hunger, to conquer poverty and disease, to banish illiteracy and massive human misery. [...] Let us complete what we have started,” he concluded, “[for] I believe the problems of human destiny are not beyond the reach of human beings.”

I believe we should draw inspiration from these words and the vision it has come to embody.

As we look ahead to the many steps that still need to be taken—on revitalization and so much else—let us remember that this Organization was founded not simply to prevent a slide backwards into unconscionable warfare, but also to strengthen the bonds of trust between states and peoples.

And as we come to point at which such a welcoming horizon of possibility comes into view, and the safe harbor that beckons stands within reach, let us be moved to action, as Kennedy was, by the belief in the ingenuity of man to overcome the obstacles he himself has set on the path to the creation of a better world—one in which scarcity, hardship and privation are seen not as a fate we must accept, but as a challenge a determined generation can overcome by truly coming together in a common cause.

Thank you for your attention.