

15 January 2015

**Preliminary Remarks by H.E. Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa,  
President of the 69<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly,  
at a Press Conference**

[Thank you Jean-Victor]

I would like to welcome those who are monitoring this press briefing online, watching it on television and all who are here in this room. I thank you all.

I would also like to express to you all my best wishes for the New Year.

Yesterday, I briefed on the activities and highlights of the work done during the General Assembly session thus far. I also outlined to Member States the important work we have ahead of us.

I will come back to that in a moment.

The heinous and brutal terrorist attacks that have affected several Member States over the past weeks by groups such as ISIS, Al-Qaeda, Al-Shabaab and Boko Haram have put in sharp focus the rising threat of terrorism and extremism. There is no justification for such attacks and we must continue to condemn them. Terrorism in all its forms and manifestations is criminal and unjustifiable, regardless of its motivation, wherever, whenever and by whomsoever committed.

The international community must re-double its efforts to combat extremism and terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We also need to promote peaceful dialogue and mutual understanding amongst peoples to avoid extremism and polarization.

I condemn all acts of terror.

On behalf of the General Assembly, I would like to convey my deepest sympathy and condolences to the victims of these deplorable acts and to their families, and to the peoples and the Governments of the respective Member States, to whom I also reiterate the solidarity of the United Nations General Assembly.

Let me underline the importance of ensuring the rights of children, and the right of every child to have access to education in a safe learning environment.

Let me also reiterate that freedom of expression and freedom of press are fundamental rights and are essential pillars of democratic societies and good governance. Every effort must be made to ensure that journalists can do their work in a safe and enabling environment and that crimes against them are prosecuted.

## **On the first part of the session of the General Assembly**

In the first four months of the 69th session, the General Assembly adopted 264 resolutions and 70 decisions. The Assembly also achieved a number of accomplishments such as:

- The unprecedented international response to the Ebola crisis, and the historic establishment of the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER);
- The completion of the preparatory work for the intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda;
- The preparatory thematic discussions on the Third Conference on Financing for Development scheduled for July;
- The adoption of the Outcome Document of the first World Conference on Indigenous Peoples;
- The Special Session on the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014;
- The endorsement of the outcome of the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States “SAMOA Pathway”.
- The endorsement of the Vienna Programme of Action following the Second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries, which I attended.

Overall, during the session, the main Committees conducted their work well and reached consensus on a number of important issues.

## **On the priorities of the General Assembly:**

Our minds are set on agreeing on a bold, ambitious and transformative Post-2015 Development Agenda that leaves no-one behind and provides a new framework for development and international cooperation for the next fifteen years. Seventy years after the founding of the United Nations, we have a truly historic opportunity to agree on an inspiring agenda that can energize the international community, governments everywhere and the citizens of the world.

We must be ready to seize this challenge.

## **On Ebola**

We are now at the 90-day mark since the establishment of the UN Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER). Although progress has been made in slowing down the spread of the epidemic in the three most affected countries, the crisis is not yet over. Far from it. We must re-double our efforts and remain seized of the crisis as the most affected countries face the devastating, long-term implications of the epidemic. Longer term recovery will require significant and sustained commitment from the international community.

I salute the heroic efforts of the national governments, the people, and the entire international community for their remarkable dedication and commitment.

The contribution by the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in collaboration with the United Nations and other partners has demonstrated the crucial importance of enhancing cooperation between the UN and regional and sub-regional organizations. This remains one of my priorities and I will be attending the 24th summit of the Heads of State and Government of the African Union to further enhance this partnership.

### **On Climate Change**

Addressing climate change remains a key priority. I participated in the COP20 in Lima, Peru last December, which laid the groundwork for a universal and meaningful agreement to be finalized in Paris in December this year, under the auspices of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

### **On Security Council Reform and General Assembly Revitalization**

The reform of the Security Council remains a priority and we need to move the intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform forward. The on-going informal consultations by the Chair are critical to finding a way toward text-based negotiations, with the next round of negotiations scheduled to begin in February.

My Spokesperson will inform you in due course regarding a briefing to the media by Amb. Courtenay Rattray of Jamaica, Chair of the UN Intergovernmental Negotiations on Security Council reform.

On revitalization of the General Assembly, while some progress has been made to improve the Assembly's efficiency and effectiveness, much more work remains to be done. For example, the recurring challenges in the completion of the work of the Fifth Committee should be addressed in the context of the revitalisation process.

### **A QUICK WORD ON UPCOMING EVENTS**

Member States, co-facilitators, and other stakeholders can count on my full and continued engagement leading up to the Summit on the post-2015 Development Agenda in late September 2015. Agreement on the modalities has set the stage for the first session of intergovernmental negotiations, which will take place next week, from 19 to 21 January.

At 1.15pm tomorrow 16 January, I will hold an interactive dialogue with civil society. This will be an opportunity to encourage the contributions of civil society and other relevant stakeholders in formulating the post-2015 development agenda.

Following a request by Member States in October last year, I have convened an informal meeting of the plenary of the General Assembly on 22 January to address concerns of a rise in anti-Semitic violence worldwide. I reiterate my condemnation of all acts of intolerance.

On 6 February, I will convene a special event on the occasion of World Interfaith Harmony Week in cooperation with a Committee of Religious NGOs.

On 9 and 10 February, I will convene a high-level thematic debate on Means of Implementation for a Transformative Post-2015 Development Agenda.

On 6 March, I will convene a high-level thematic debate on Advancing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

In April, I will convene a high-level thematic debate focusing on the Promotion of Tolerance and Reconciliation in collaboration with the High Representative of the Secretary-General on the Alliance of Civilisations.

In May, I will convene a high-Level thematic debate on Strengthening Cooperation between the UN and regional and sub-regional organizations with a view to enhance these partnerships.

In June, I will also convene a high-level event on "The Demographic Dividend and Youth Employment". The event will focus on the investments needed to reap the demographic dividend, including through employment opportunities and decent work for young people.

On 29 June, I will convene a high-level event on Climate Change to keep the momentum on Climate change and take stock of progress ahead of COP21 in Paris.

In the coming months, I look forward to the unveiling of the Permanent Memorial to Honour the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade here on the grounds of the United Nations.