

14 September 2015

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

I thank all of you present in this room, and also thank those who are monitoring this press briefing from a remote location.

This is the last press briefing I hold as President of the General Assembly.

This session presented us with a historic opportunity to change our world, for the better. We achieved a great deal, and I am very grateful to Member States, the Secretary-General, and key actors, for the superb support each provided to our collective efforts.

When the session closes this afternoon, the Assembly will have held 105 plenary meetings and adopted 327 resolutions.

But important work remains on the road ahead.

The 2030 development agenda was without question one of the major highlights of the session and will guide our development efforts for the next 15 years. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for Development will be the cornerstone of a renewed partnership for development.

Yet, our endeavour to set our world on a sustainable course will be moot if we do not address one of the defining challenges of our time – climate change.

It will be critical to reach a bold and ambitious agreement in Paris that promotes the achievement of sustainable development, while protecting the planet.

As you will recall, the General Assembly showed responsiveness in the face of new challenges, such as the Ebola outbreak, on which the membership adopted its first resolution of the session, endorsing the establishment of the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER), a first-of-its-kind public health mission.

Throughout this session, I strongly condemned, several times, the disturbing rise of radicalization and violent extremism around the world, with violent attacks that killed many innocent men, women and children or destroyed irreplaceable artefacts of humanity's shared cultural heritage.

In April, the Assembly held a High-level Thematic Debate on Promoting Tolerance and Reconciliation. With religious leaders, we explored ways to foster dialogue, inclusiveness and mutual understanding as many speakers stressed the importance of leaving no one on the margins of society.

In December, we launched the International Decade for People of African Descent and in March we unveiled the Permanent Memorial to Honour the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade on the grounds of the United Nations.

We marked the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Conference on Women and for the first time the Office of the President of the General Assembly hosted the global observance of International Women's Day and we were proud to do so jointly with UN Women.

Many high-level thematic debates were held during the session.

I am proud to recall that it is during this session that the inaugural Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela Prize was bestowed in July to two remarkable personalities who have dedicated their lives to the service of humanity.

As we mark the 70th anniversary of the foundation of the United Nations, we should continue to reflect on the revitalization of the United Nations so that our Organization is better equipped to address local, national, regional and international challenges.

In the context of the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, Member States have agreed to give a greater role to this body in the upcoming election of the Secretary-General. This is an important step toward openness and transparency in the selection process.

During this session, I made Security Council reform one of my priorities in order to move this process forward. I thank the Chair of the Intergovernmental Negotiations, Ambassador Courtenay Rattray, Permanent Representative of Jamaica for his steadfast leadership through the negotiations. Together we should muster the resolve to reform the Council in a way that reflects the geo-political realities of our current world. I welcome the adoption this morning of a decision by consensus to move the process forward building on the work done during this session.

It has been a great pleasure to meet and work with so many people who remain committed to the values enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, and to meet with you, the media, from time to time. I only wished I had more time to do so.

My appreciation goes to the Member States who have worked diligently throughout the session. I am thankful for your hard work and partnership, as well as your high-level participation at events throughout the session.

I am also grateful to the co-facilitators and chairs of the many inter-governmental processes that have been carried out during the session. Your commitment has enabled us to make a lasting, positive impact for many.

I also thank the numerous other stakeholders that participated in events during the session, including our partners from civil society, the business sector, youth, religious communities and academia.

Again, I am grateful to the Secretary-General His Excellency Ban Ki-moon for his partnership and friendship. I commend him for his commitment and steadfast efforts on behalf of people around the world. I also thank all staff of the Secretariat who have worked behind the scenes, and in particular the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management and the Department of Public Information, for their professionalism and unwavering support over the course of these last 12 months.

I am convinced President-elect Lykketoft, will shepherd this august body in an efficient and inspirational manner for the 70th session. I wish him the best.

I will gladly take a few questions.