

14 January 2015

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa,
President of the 69th Session of the General Assembly,
at a Briefing to the General Assembly**

**Excellencies,
Mr. Deputy Secretary-General,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am pleased, in line with resolution 68/307, to provide this briefing on the activities and highlights of the work done during the General Assembly session thus far, and to outline the important work we have ahead of us.

In the first four months of its 69th session, the Assembly adopted 264 resolutions and 70 decisions. We also achieved a number of important accomplishments, including:

- 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 completion of preparatory thematic discussions on the Third Conference on Financing for Development, scheduled for July;
- The endorsement 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 SAMOA Pathway, following the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States;
- The endorsement of the Vienna Programme of Action, following the 2nd United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries, which I attended.

Throughout, Member States have demonstrated a sense of unity and collaboration, which has enabled important progress on a number of critical issues.

**Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

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

The First Committee deliberated on items covering its seven clusters; most of them closely linked with disarmament and security issues. In particular, discussions in the First Committee gave impetus to the need to revitalize the UN disarmament machinery.

The adoption of the resolution commemorating 26 September as the “International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons” will galvanize further efforts toward achieving nuclear disarmament.

The Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference will take place from 27 April to 22 May, here in New York. It will consider several issues, including nuclear disarmament, peaceful uses of nuclear energy and nuclear weapons-free zones.

Eradication of poverty, scaling up of efforts to achieve the MDGs, reducing inequality, the promotion of sustained economic growth, sustainable development and addressing the needs of countries in special situations – LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS, were some of the issues taken up by the Second Committee during the main session.

The Committee concluded its work with the adoption of a resolution establishing an Ad Hoc Committee on a multilateral legal framework for sovereign debt restructuring. The Ad hoc Committee is expected to begin its work once a Bureau has been constituted.

Two high-level events will also take place in the coming months as a result of resolutions adopted by the Second Committee. The first high-level event will focus on a comprehensive review of the progress achieved in the implementation of the International Decade of Action on Water for Life. The second event will feature an inclusive and interactive dialogue on “Harmony with Nature.”

During the main session, the Third Committee considered a broad range of issues including gender equality and empowerment of women, human rights, humanitarian matters, refugees and crime. Arising out of one of the Committee’s resolutions, a high-level thematic event on the World Drug Problem will be held.

In addition, another high-level event on Integrating Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in the Post-2015 Agenda will take place on 24 February. This will precede the 13th UN Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice to be held in Doha in April.

The Fourth Committee considered items on decolonization, peacekeeping, public information and support for Palestinian refugees, among others, during the main session. The Assembly also commemorated the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

Renewed tension and the lack of progress in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations remain matters of serious concern. The international community should continue to support the parties to overcome their differences and return to direct talks. The United Nations needs to play a more active role in supporting the parties in their efforts to achieve a just and comprehensive negotiated settlement.

A range of issues dominated the work of the Fifth Committee, including the programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015, peacekeeping operations and the budget outline for the biennium 2016-2017. The

Committee also dealt with the renovation and construction cluster, as well as items related to the UN Common System and the pattern of conferences.

Serious concern was expressed by delegations about what is becoming customary for the 5th Committee; namely, the late conclusion of the main part of its session. Member States expressed concern that a bad and unnecessary precedent was being set with the Committee's final meeting taking place after 24 December.

It is essential that the Committee adheres to its programme of work adopted at the start of the session. Every effort needs to be made to ensure the timely submission of reports to avoid intense last-minute negotiations and partial agreements, leaving many important agenda items deferred.

In Sixth Committee and related international law issues, progress was made on many important matters, including the adoption of the Convention on Transparency in Treaty-Based Investor State Arbitration, which will open for signature in March 2015.

With the recent commemoration of the 20th Anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention on Oceans and the Law of the Sea this year, I encourage progress in concluding an international legally binding instrument under the Convention on matters of conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction.

Excellencies,

As we embark on the critical task of formulating an inclusive and transformative post-2015 development agenda, I call on Member States to approach the negotiations with a positive and constructive spirit.

Over the next several months, we have a truly historic opportunity to agree on an inspiring agenda that will directly improve the lives of people around the world. The co-facilitators, the membership and other stakeholders can count on my full and continued engagement leading up to the Summit, which will take place from 25 to 27 September.

Agreement on the modalities has been a significant step forward in this process and sets the stage for the first session of intergovernmental negotiations, which will take place next week, from 19 to 21 January.

Relevant stakeholders, including civil society, will be engaged throughout the intergovernmental process in an open and transparent manner. The initial draft of the Outcome Document, which should be prepared by this coming May, will be based on Member States' views and take into account discussions throughout the negotiations.

The success of the new development agenda will depend on our ability to match our ambitions with adequate means of implementation. In this respect, it will be critical to ensure coherence and synergies

between the elaboration of the post-2015 agenda and the preparatory process for the Third Conference on Financing for Development.

The informal thematic sessions, which were concluded in December, examined the substantive issues that need to be addressed in the Conference. The draft Outcome Document, to be issued in February for consideration by Member States, will be a key input for the preparatory process.

I will convene a high-level thematic debate on Means of Implementation for a Transformative post-2015 development agenda on 9 and 10 February. This event will be an opportunity for the exchange of views and experiences on the mobilization of financial resources, the development and transfer of technology and the promotion of capacity-building initiatives.

Furthermore, on 4 and 5 March, informal interactive hearings with representatives of civil society and the private sector will be held on preparations for the Financing for Development Conference.

I would also like to inform the membership that in addition to the high-level thematic debates and events already communicated; I will also convene a high-level event on “The Demographic Dividend and Youth Employment” in June. The event will focus on the investments needed to reap the demographic dividend, including through employment opportunities and decent work for young people.

Esteemed Colleagues,

Addressing climate change remains a key priority. I participated in the COP20 in Peru last December, where important decisions were adopted, including the Lima Call for Climate Action, which laid the groundwork for a universal and meaningful agreement to be finalized in Paris in December this year, under the auspices of the UNFCCC.

The high-level event on Climate Change that I will convene on 29 June is aimed at keeping the momentum and taking stock of the progress ahead of COP21.

Furthermore, the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, to be held in Sendai, Japan, from 14 to 18 March is expected to result in a post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction, with a view to enhancing preparedness and strengthening countermeasures to climate-related disasters. I look forward to participating in the Conference, which will pave the way for building the resilience of nations and communities.

As we formulate an ambitious and transformative post-2015 development agenda, it will be essential to consider ways to further integrate disaster risk reduction, climate change and sustainability.

Distinguished Delegates,

The devastating Ebola epidemic is another issue of major concern for the General Assembly and the subject of several meetings, including two briefings, which I convened during the main session.

Throughout the crisis, the efforts of national governments have been heroic, as have been those of humanitarian staff, nurses, doctors, burial workers and ordinary civilians.

The Assembly's endorsement of UNMEER in its first resolution of the 69th session, demonstrated the international community's readiness to assist the hardest hit countries and their peoples.

Although progress has been made in slowing the spread of the Ebola infections, the crisis is not yet over. 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.

Excellencies,

Experience has shown that fostering cooperation between the United Nations and regional and sub-regional organizations significantly contributes to development and the maintenance of peace and security. The collaboration between the United Nations, the African Union and ECOWAS in dealing with the Ebola outbreak has demonstrated how these organizations can use their unique and complementary capacities to address common challenges.

This month, I will be attending the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. In May, I will convene a high-level thematic debate in May on Strengthening Cooperation between the UN and regional and sub-regional organizations with a view to enhance these partnerships.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The promotion of peace and security is at the very heart of our collective mission at the United Nations and will continue to be of great importance to the international community throughout the remainder of the session. Over the last several months, numerous conflicts worldwide have been a stark reminder of the need for continued engagement towards the peaceful settlement of disputes.

Following the required 50 ratifications, the landmark Arms Trade Treaty came into force on 24 December. This important instrument will certainly contribute to limiting illicit arms trade and further arms control.

Ten years after the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission, the 2015 Peacebuilding Architecture Review has been launched. This review will provide an opportunity to improve the peacebuilding capacity of the United Nations system.

The brutal terrorist attacks carried out by ISIS, Al-Qaeda, Al-Shabaab and Boko Haram; the murders of school children in Pakistan; and the heinous terrorist attacks in Paris, Nigeria and elsewhere 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 wherever, whenever and by whomsoever commits them.

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

In this regard, I intend to convene a high-level thematic debate in April, focusing on the Promotion of Tolerance and Reconciliation. I call upon all Member States to participate in this event at the highest possible level.

Excellencies,

As the United Nations celebrates the 70th anniversary of its founding this year, it is critical that we consider how we can reform and strengthen the organisation to meet the world's increasingly complex global challenges.

In this context, the reform of the Security Council is a priority. I would like to reiterate the 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.

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, as I have mentioned should be addressed in the context of the revitalisation process.

Distinguished Delegates,

The promotion of equality and the fundamental rights of all will continue to inform our work going forward; particularly as this Assembly session marks the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Conference on Women. To give greater focus to advancing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the Post-2015 Development Agenda, I will convene a high-level thematic debate on this topic on March 6.

In addition, you will recall that last month we launched the International Decade for People of African Descent. 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 this coming March.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

From the foregoing, it is clear that the Assembly will take up a meaningful, substantive agenda throughout the remainder of the session.

To accomplish our goals, we will need to show political courage and determination. We must work together with a renewed spirit of cooperation and consensus-building.

People around the world are watching us with great expectations. Let us not disappoint them.

I thank you for your attention.