

12 May 2015

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa,
President of the 69th Session of the General Assembly,
on “Strengthening the Institutional Memory of the Office of the
President of the General Assembly”**

Delivered by Ambassador Arthur Kafeero on behalf of President Kutesa

**Co-Chairs of the Ad-Hoc Working Group on GA Revitalization,
Excellencies
Under-Secretary-General, Tegegnework Gettu
Distinguished Delegates**

I am pleased to address you on behalf of H.E Sam K. Kutesa, President of the 69th Session of the General Assembly.

I thank the Co-Chairs of the Ad-Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly (AHWG) for convening this meeting, specifically focusing on strengthening the institutional memory of the President of the General Assembly. The President highly values this exchange of views with Member States on the revitalization of the General Assembly.

Excellencies,

As you may recall, the theme for the 69th Session is “Delivering on and Implementing a Transformative Post-2015 Development Agenda”. Accordingly, the President has spent considerable time on activities and events in support of this theme. The President briefed the General Assembly membership on his work on 14 January this year, as well as during the first general meeting of this Ad-Hoc Working Group on 3 March.

A number of important intergovernmental processes and negotiations are on-going, they include; the Third International Conference on Financing for Development; the post-2015 development agenda; and Security Council reform.

Since the President’s last interaction with this Ad-hoc Working Group in March, he has presided over several formal and informal meetings of the General Assembly. Some of these meetings were commemorative events.

On 25 March on the grounds of the United Nations, the spirit, courage and legacy of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade was honoured by the unveiling of the permanent memorial – The Ark of Return.

On 30 March the PGA convened a High-level Interactive Dialogue on The International Decade for Action, ‘Water for Life’: Progress achieved and lessons learned for sustainable development.

On 15 April 2015, the General Assembly commemorated the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace.

And on 5 May 2015, a special solemn meeting of the General Assembly was held in commemoration of all victims of the Second World War. It was preceded by a tree planting to commemorate the end of the war.

Excellencies,

The PGA has convened several high level meetings and interactive thematic debates on issues of critical importance to Member States, which have resulted in productive outcomes. Some of the important events that have taken place include the:

- Interactive Hearing with the private sector and civil society on Financing for Development on 8 – 9 April, 2015.
- High-level Thematic Debate on promoting tolerance and reconciliation, convened on 21 – 22 April, 2015 in collaboration with the Secretary-General and the High Representative on the UN Alliance of Civilisations;
- High-level Thematic Debate on strengthening cooperation between the United Nations and regional and sub-regional organisations on 4 May, 2015; and the
- High-level Thematic Debate on the World Drug Problem on 7 May, 2015.

In the coming period the PGA will convene the;

- Informal Interactive Hearings with representatives of non-governmental organizations, civil society, major groups and the private sector on the post-2015 development agenda on 26 – 27 May, 2015;
- Commemorative event to mark the 20th anniversary of the World Programme of Action for Youth on 29th May and a High level event on Demographic Dividend and Youth Employment on 1st June, 2015 and the,
- High-level event on Climate Change on 29 June 2015.

As part of his efforts to mobilise high level participation and support for a concrete outcome at the upcoming Financing for Development Conference in Addis Ababa this July, the President of the General Assembly attended the spring meetings of the World Bank in Washington last month during which he held bilateral meetings with several Ministers of Finance and Development Cooperation and the President of the World Bank.

The President and the Secretary General also, for the first time, attended the meeting of the Joint World Bank/IMF Ministerial Development Committee on 18 April. The PGA will also be travelling to Brussels to attend the European Development Days on 3 – 4 June, 2015.

Excellencies,

The President continues to give attention to strengthening further cooperation, coordination and exchange of information with the other principal organs of the United Nations and the Secretariat. In this regard, the President has continued to hold regular meetings with the Presidents of the Security Council, Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and also with the Secretary-General.

As has been demonstrated in the past sessions, the agenda and the workload of the Assembly during the 69th session and consequently of the PGA has considerably increased. This workload regrettably has not been matched with the requisite resources. This state of affairs undermines the role, authority, effectiveness and efficiency of the General Assembly.

Strengthening the role and authority of the PGA will require bold steps from Member States. One such step is ensuring that the Office has adequate and predictable resources from the regular budget. The US\$250,000 approved by the General Assembly in 1998 which is annually adjusted for inflation, falls far short of what is required. Two examples can ably illustrate the issues at hand:

The first is with regard to staffing. Apart from the staff provided by the United Nations, a PGA depends on staff from his/her own country, secondments from friendly countries or Advisors supported by agencies. Our experience has shown that by the time the President gets a full complement of appropriate staffing, the Session is well under way.

The second challenge relates to accommodation and other personal expenses of the PGA. It is inexplicable that with a 70 year history the organisation does not provide or cater for residence for the PGA, leaving this cost to be incurred by his or her country.

With a charter principle on the sovereign equality of all its members, Member States should take measures to ensure adequate and predictable resources to the Office; otherwise given the current expenditure outlay, some Member States may never offer a candidate for President of the General Assembly.

In this regard, the support by the Government of Uganda, Member States and organisations through the secondment of staff and contributions made to the Trust Fund are appreciated.

As a sign of the commitment to facilitate transition and continuity to the in-coming PGA, the President of the 69th Session accepted to have some staff who will work with the in-coming President, attached to his Cabinet. The President stands ready to work with and support the incoming PGA for the 70th session.

Finally, the important work done in this session would not have been possible without the dedication, tireless efforts and professionalism of the staff of the Secretariat. We owe them deep gratitude and appreciation, particularly the staff in the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management (DGACM).

I thank you for your attention.