

16 June 2015

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa,
President of the 69th Session of the General Assembly,
at “Towards a Stronger UN General Assembly” Retreat**

**Excellencies,
H.E. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

I am pleased to join you today and thank the Permanent Representative of Finland, Ambassador Kai Sauer, for organising this retreat and inviting me to share reflections of the 69th session of the United Nations General Assembly.

The session has once again demonstrated the central role of the General Assembly as the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations.

The agenda of the Assembly and consequently the work of the Office of the President of the General Assembly has continued to grow and evolve, as evident by its workload. Since the start of the session there have been 94 formal meetings of the Assembly and hundreds of informal meetings. Furthermore, the Assembly has adopted 288 resolutions and more than 80 decisions.

Three major processes have been on-going during this session. The formulation of a transformative post-2015 development agenda, discussions on the Financing for Development process as well as negotiations on a new, universal climate change agreement. Relevant stakeholders, including civil society and private sector have been engaged throughout in an open and transparent manner. I expect that, the coming session will be pre-occupied with implementing the outcomes from the processes.

The work of the General Assembly has covered a wide range of issues beyond these major processes under three pillars of its work. The membership has shown a great deal of flexibility and responsiveness in the face of a number of unanticipated global challenges.

The Ebola outbreak in West Africa is an example of the unpredictable nature of the work on the Assembly's agenda. The establishment of the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER) following the adoption of the Assembly's first resolution of the session on 23rd September, 2014 demonstrated its ability to respond speedily to an emerging crisis in a supportive and collaborative manner.

**Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,**

Many of my efforts throughout the session have focused on the need to build bridges and consensus with a number of interlocutors on issues of great importance to the international community.

I held close consultations with the chairs of regional groups and Member States on different issues on the Assembly's agenda. I have found these consultations important including in the appointments of co-facilitators and co-chairs for various inter-governmental processes.

I have regularly engaged and exchanged views with the Presidents of the other principle organs of the United Nations, including the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

Since the start of the session, I have participated in a number of ECOSOC events and invited the President of ECOSOC to participate in several General Assembly events.

I also worked closely with the President of the Security Council in the appointment of an Advisory Group on the Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture. Furthermore, following the presentation of the Annual Report of the Security Council in November, I presented to the President of the Council for the month of December, 2014 a summary of the major issues expressed by the membership on both the content and quality of the report during that debate. I hope the views of the membership will be taken care of in the next annual report.

Throughout the session, I have maintained close contact with the Secretary-General on a number of issues on the agenda of the organization and I have found this to be invaluable. For example, I collaborated closely with his Office in the organization of a number of events, including a High-level Thematic Debate on Promoting Tolerance and Reconciliation.

The General Committee has played a pivotal role in the work of the Assembly. The Vice Presidents regularly shouldered the responsibility of presiding over the business of the General Assembly, including presiding over a number of informal and formal meetings. I appreciate their support in this endeavour.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The revitalization of the work of the General Assembly has been a major area of focus throughout this session. The repetitive nature of Assembly debates, slow decision-making processes as well as the continued lack of mechanisms to ensure or assess the implementation of resolutions remain serious challenges.

I share the concern of the member states about what is becoming customary for the 5th committee to conclude its work late in the main part of the session. The holding of the Committee's final meeting after 24 December was in itself unnecessary precedent. It is critical that the committee like other main committees, adheres to its programme of work adopted at the start of the session and timely submission

of reports should be made to avoid intense last-minute negotiations and partial agreements, leaving many important agenda items differed.

During the session, I received a letter from the chairpersons of the Main Committees with proposals to improve the working methods and brought it to the attention of the Co-chairs of the A Hoc Working group on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly.

On the reform of the Security Council I have underscored the need to move the process toward text-based negotiations.

**Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,**

Over the course of the session, the series of high-level thematic debates and events I have convened have represented an important part of our work. These debates and events have included among others, women's empowerment and gender equality, the world drug problem, the Means of Implementation to the post-2015 development agenda.

It is noteworthy that the high-level debate I convened on strengthening regional and sub-regional cooperation resulted into adoption of a Political Declaration.

The active engagement of the membership at these events demonstrates the great importance the membership attaches to these issues, although time constraints often presented challenges in allowing everyone to participate.

Going forward, it will be important for Member States to be mindful of time limitations when making their interventions to ensure future high-level debates and events allow for the widest participation possible.

The work we have accomplished so far would not have been possible without the support and cooperation of the staff of the Secretariat. I particularly commend the staff of the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management (DGACM).

In conclusion, I would like to highlight critical importance of ensuring that the Office of the President of the General Assembly has adequate and predictable resources, as well as sufficient staffing in the near future. These issues remain serious challenges that must be addressed to ensure future Presidencies can deliver on their responsibilities.

I thank you for your attention.