



21 July 2008

Excellencies,

In lieu of my intended briefing to members of the General Committee originally scheduled on 10 July, allow me to update you on where we are with our priority issues for the 62<sup>nd</sup> session of the General Assembly as well as highlight some of the achievements and the work we still have ahead of us for the next two months.

**Climate change** has become the defining agenda item for the General Assembly. It was the main topic for the general debate last September and the focus of a high-level thematic debate in February. We followed-up by two focused discussions in June and July. Our first follow-up meeting, a month ago, looked at the nexus between private investment and climate change. Most recently, on 9 July, we focused on the needs of the most vulnerable countries highlighting the fact that climate change poses special threats and places extra demands on a considerable group of countries.

From our meetings it became very clear that in order to address the challenge of climate change we need a multi-stakeholder approach, in particular involving the private sector. We need to build effective and creative partnerships in order to take concrete and practical actions. And the United Nations is best placed to provide an integrated response to the complementary challenges of addressing climate change and achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Based on these debates, it is my hope that the Assembly will adopt a resolution taking a principled stand, demonstrating its relevance and sending a strong political message in support of agreeing on a comprehensive global framework in 2009.

Achieving the **Millennium Development Goals** is one of our main development priorities. The informal thematic debate in April testified to the full engagement of all Member States and it was made very clear that delivering on our commitments is a priority and that delivering results a necessity. Therefore we must maintain a continuous and high-level

Members of the General Committee  
CC: All Permanent Representatives and Observers

commitment to the Goals by Member States, including by having the MDGs as a regular topic of the Assembly. You may recall, that I proposed to have annual review meetings in the General Assembly on where we are with the Goals until 2015.

The **leaders meeting on the MDGs**, to be held on 25 September, to which the Secretary-General and myself have invited Heads of State and Government, aims at ensuring such a commitment at the highest level and to accelerate the delivery of concrete results. The preparations for this meeting are well under way.

In this regard it is important to add that on 22 September 2008 the General Assembly will hold a **high-level meeting specifically on Africa's development needs**. The process led by the two facilitators - the Ambassadors of Angola and the Netherlands - must result in a strong political commitment to address the challenges of Africa. The office of the Special Advisor on Africa is assisting in the preparations of that meeting.

The high-level meeting to review the 2001 and 2006 declarations on **HIV/AIDS** took place on 10-11 June. Eight heads of state and government attended the meeting, as well as more than 96 Ministers and Vice-Ministers. The discussions were a good reflection of the commitments of Member States, observers and other participants, including NGOs that had been closely engaged throughout the process, to meet the 2010 universal access deadline and the MDG 6 to reduce or reverse the spread of the disease by 2015. The Presidential summary taking into account the key issues raised at the meeting is going to be issued very soon.

On **Financing for Development** we have had a very substantive session, including a high-level dialogue in October 2007. It was the topic of the first informal debate upon my assumption of the presidency of the 62<sup>nd</sup> session in September last year. In accordance with resolution 62/187 six review sessions were held on the six chapters of the Monterrey Consensus, including hearings with civil society and the business sector. A summary of each review has been circulated. The two facilitators, the Ambassadors of Egypt and Norway, are currently working on the first draft of the outcome document for the Doha review conference that I intend to circulate by the end of July. On 8 September, I intend to convene a plenary meeting to officially launch the negotiations on the draft outcome document. The prime minister of Qatar, the Host country of the upcoming Doha meeting, as well



as the two special envoys of the Secretary-General on this subject, the Finance Minister of South Africa and the Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany, have been invited to attend.

In view of the nexus between Climate Change, Financing for Development and MDGs, the **global food security** has been regarded as an urgent and important issue. During my recent travels the global food crisis was at the forefront of discussions with my hosts – with everyone expressing the need for urgent and concerted action.

On 18 June the General Assembly heard a briefing by the Secretary-General on the food crisis following the FAO Summit in Rome. At that meeting Member States expressed support for convening a special plenary meeting of the General Assembly. On 18 and 21 July, the General Assembly met in plenary meeting to discuss the issue. The Secretary-General presented his Comprehensive Plan of Action and many Member States took the floor emphasizing the severity of the crisis. Given the urgency of the crisis, the General Assembly should adopt a resolution calling for immediate concerted action. I also support the call from many Member States for food security and development to be one of the priorities of the 63<sup>rd</sup> session.

On **Counter-terrorism** we have also been engaged throughout the session. On 4 December we held an informal meeting of the General Assembly to have a mid-term stocktaking on the implementation of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. Since then I have organized briefings by the chairman of the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force, Mr. Robert Orr, to the General Assembly. Our work is currently focused on preparing the 4 September formal review of the Strategy at the Assembly with the Ambassador of Guatemala as my facilitator. The Secretary-General's report on the activities of the UN system aimed at implementing the Strategy has been circulated as an advance copy to Member States and will further assist in the preparations for the September review. We must send a strong and unified message against terrorism and rededicate ourselves to the commitments undertaken in the strategy as well as strengthen the cooperation between Member States and the UN. Member States need to decide on an appropriate follow-up to ensure the continuation of the Strategy's implementation after the current session.

**Management reform** was for the very first time discussed in the format of a thematic debate in the General Assembly in April. A summary of the

debate was circulated. The debate allowed Member States to engage in a high-level strategic discussion with the Secretary-General and top Secretariat officials on how to improve the effectiveness of the work of the Organization. It also stimulated further informal dialogue among the membership on this important issue.

We focused on three areas: the formulation of mandates, human resources and budget process. The membership stressed the need for greater transparency and enhanced accountability, and also for a more strategic, goal orientated method to set the overall policy objectives of the Organization. On the budget, I continue to believe that Member States should give serious consideration to the establishment of a unified budget for the Organization – that would then allow for more transparency, control and efficiency.

**Mandate review** is another essential part of the management reform initiatives. At the beginning of the 62<sup>nd</sup> session Member States agreed on a set of principles to guide their work. Since then the Ambassadors of Namibia and New Zealand have been carrying this process further as facilitators. They have developed a methodology and accomplished together with Member States an important achievement by reaching agreement in May on a number of recommendations for mandates related to “humanitarian assistance” issues. This is the first concrete outcome of the process of mandate review since it started in 2005. The Secretary-General is currently preparing information on the operational and financial implications of agreed recommendations, based on which Member States will take a final decision on these mandates. The facilitators have recently concluded the preliminary analysis of a second group of mandates on “Development of Africa”. They are currently consulting Member States with a view to reaching an agreement on the final recommendations and expect to report to me by the end of July. It is important to note that the process of mandate review be continued in the 63<sup>rd</sup> session.

From our reform agenda, **reform of the Security Council** has generated considerable expectation and much attention both from the general public through the media as well as from Member States. Since the very beginning of the 62<sup>nd</sup> session I have been constantly engaged on this issue and have been consulting with Member States. I introduced the seven principles as the benchmark for the way forward. We have had a debate in the General Assembly in November 2007 and three meetings of the Open-ended Working Group in December 2007 and April and June 2008. The Task Force



– the Ambassadors of Bangladesh, Chile, Djibouti and Portugal – has consulted the entire membership and submitted a report.

The various positions of Member States are well known and all have been put on the table, including the option of an intermediary solution. It seems, however, that it is difficult to reach agreement for negotiations on this basis. Under these circumstances, the only way to advance the process on this issue to the next stage is to open intergovernmental negotiations as stipulated in decision 61/561. I am currently preparing a draft report of the Open-ended Working Group, including recommendations.

**On System-Wide Coherence** the Ambassadors of Ireland and Tanzania as facilitators have held very productive consultations with the membership on issues related to governance, finance, business practices and gender. Also, they have visited a number of pilot countries to gain first hand experience at the field level where System-Wide Coherence matters most. So these will be key elements of their report. Also, the Secretary-General is to submit a note on institutional options on gender issues shortly. I will circulate both documents to Member States thereafter. Overall, I believe that we have created conditions to advance on this issue, which will need to be continued during the 63<sup>rd</sup> session.

**On International Environmental Governance** the Ambassadors of Mexico and Switzerland as facilitators held extensive consultations with the membership on the Options Paper of June 2007 and presented a draft resolution to Member States on 2 May 2008. Since then they held three rounds of informal consultations in which Member States welcomed the draft resolution as a solid basis for discussion. The Facilitators will soon present a revised draft resolution.

**On revitalization of the General Assembly** the Ad Hoc Working Group chaired by the Ambassadors of Paraguay and Poland has been reviewing the implementation of resolutions on General Assembly revitalization since the 51<sup>st</sup> session. Their report will be submitted to the General Assembly shortly.

Ultimately, General Assembly revitalization must be about strengthening the United Nations system through more responsive, substantive work in the Assembly. This is why I proposed to do away with the notion of “General Assembly revitalization” and instead proposed to talk about ‘the role of the General Assembly in strengthening the United Nations system.’

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There is a growing tendency to focus on real and topical issues and **Member States are the driving force**. We are using panel discussions and interactive debates to shift away from a series of monologues toward a dialogue.

Let me also stress that there is regular and close cooperation between the General Assembly and other United Nations organs. The regular **briefings to the Assembly by the Secretary-General** as well as by other key officials such as the Special Advisor of the Secretary-General on Myanmar have proven to be a very useful exercise. As President of the General Assembly I am working and coordinating closely with the Secretary-General on a permanent basis. I also held regular meetings with the Presidents of the Security Council and ECOSOC.

**Multi-stakeholder participation** is now an accepted format when debating and addressing major challenges in the General Assembly. In dealing with our priority issues we took an integrated, holistic approach and most importantly we have been looking for practical solutions through innovative partnerships. I also held three briefings to NGOs to update them on activities of the General Assembly, together with facilitators and co-chairs as well as with the chairs of Main Committees.

Also, the two thematic debates on **human security** and **human trafficking** were held for the first time, based on the initiative of Member States.

Many Member States took the floor on **human security** and highlighted that it is about international, national and individual efforts that build on local capacities and empower people to fend for themselves in ways that are collaborative, responsive and sustainable. I call upon all to use the momentum behind human security to make our common efforts toward achieving the MDGs, promotion of human rights and security more efficient.

From our deliberations on **human trafficking** it became clear that that we share a common commitment and goals and that we stand ready and willing to join forces to overcome the scourge of human trafficking. To this end, several speakers suggested that we need to develop a global action plan, a comprehensive mechanism to counter-act human trafficking.



Allow me to refer to other ongoing activities in the General Assembly.

In addition to these reform issues, we also made progress in **inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogues**. We held a High-level Dialogue in October last year. The address by His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI to the Assembly was a very significant event in this context. I note the important roles being played by the Alliance of Civilization in this field.

Let me also remind you that the last day of the 62<sup>nd</sup> session, 15 September falls to the **International Day of Democracy**, as stipulated in resolution 62/7. I intend to convene an informal plenary meeting for the first observance of this Day, prior to our wrap-up formal plenary meeting.

In preparation for the high-level plenary meeting devoted to the midterm review of the **Almaty Programme of Action** addressing the special needs of landlocked developing countries scheduled for 2 and 3 October 2008, the Ambassador of Japan is facilitating consultations including on the outcome document. A report of the Secretary-General on the progress made in the implementation of the Programme of Action will be issued soon.

Finally, with regard to the preparations of the **United Nations Conference on South-South cooperation** I have entrusted the Ambassador of Qatar in his capacity as the President of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation to undertake the necessary consultations with Member States.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all members of the General Committee for the support that you have shown throughout the 62<sup>nd</sup> session. Our work is far from over, and I will continue to count on your support and advice as we strive to complete our work by the close of the session on 15 September.

Sincerely,



Srgjan Kerim