

29 October 2010

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Joseph Deiss,
President of the 65th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Meeting with Japanese Parliamentarians**

Distinguished Members of Parliament,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me to be with you today in Tokyo and I thank you for the opportunity to have a dialogue with you. The support of Parliaments to the activities of the United Nations is of utmost importance.

Poverty reduction, sustainable development and global governance are the three main clusters of issues figuring high on the agenda of the 65th session. These are also issues of great concern for your country and I am pleased to stress that Japan is at the forefront of the international community in addressing these challenges.

1. Reaching the Millennium Development Goals

At the Millennium Summit in 2000, the international community adopted the most ambitious programme ever launched to combat poverty. In doing so, the international community demonstrated that all the peoples of the United Nations formed a single community and that no one had the right to remain indifferent to abject poverty and the suffering of others.

By launching the Millennium Development Goals, the General Assembly gave great hope to millions of men and women. Reports prepared for the MDG High-level Plenary Meeting that took place a few weeks ago in New York showed that, after ten years of efforts, at a time when the world is recovering from the economic and financial crisis, the picture is mixed. Real progress has been made in some respects: poverty has declined in overall terms. But the realisation of the MDGs is lagging behind in some regions, such as sub-Saharan Africa. And we are also off track in some areas, especially with regard to eradicating hunger, reducing child mortality and improving maternal health.

Yet, even though the economic and financial crisis has undermined progress, preceding decades of strong growth and the resilience of emerging markets throughout the crisis have shown the strong potential of the global economy to reach the goals. The international community has the financial and technical means to keep the promise it made in 2000. Additional efforts must be made. This was the message that came out of the MDG summit. I welcome the announcement by Prime Minister Kan of a new substantial contribution in the health and education areas.

There is now a need to make sure that the strong political signal that was sent by world leaders a month ago in New York will translate into action and concrete results for the poor. In this regard, the proposal of Prime Minister Kan to convene an international conference in Japan in 2011 to follow up on the MDG summit is an initiative I welcome. The General Assembly will also play its role to monitor progress; for instance I will ensure that the political momentum is maintained and that the importance of the topic is reflected in our debates throughout the 65th session.

I am impressed by the strong commitment of Parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union to the Millennium Development Goals. In his statement at the MDG summit, the Secretary-General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union made a call for Parliaments to ensure that the development goals are taken into account in their daily work and translated into national programs and laws. This is indeed very relevant.

2. Moving towards a greener economic model

If we want to consolidate results in reducing poverty and in fostering economic development, we have to aim for sustainable development. We have to step up efforts to reconcile economic growth and environmental concerns by moving towards a green economy.

Environment and sustainable development form a second cluster of issues high on the agenda of the 65th session of the General Assembly. The strong commitment of Japan in addressing global environmental challenges has to be commended. The fact that your country is hosting the 10th Conference of Parties (COP) of the Convention on Biological Diversity in Nagoya is an example of its determination to play an important role in this area.

This year, important decisions will also have to be taken as regards climate change. The outcome of the meeting that will take place in Cancun in December will be decisive to overcome the current deadlock in post-Kyoto negotiations.

3. Reaffirming the central role of the United Nations in global governance

Poverty reduction, sustainable development, these are among the many challenges that we are confronted with today and that can no longer be solved by states acting individually.

The world is indeed getting more interconnected and interdependent and we are increasingly facing global challenges that affect all countries and their citizens. This is true for the two areas just mentioned, but this is true for many economic and financial issues, for migration and pandemics and for emerging topics like global terrorism and cyber crime.

These challenges have to be addressed through global decision-making and global action, that is through global governance. Let me clarify that global governance is not the same thing as global government. We are not heading towards establishing a world parliament; global governance is a way of organizing decision-making in a world of sovereign entities with their national parliaments.

Furthermore, global governance should be based on the principle of subsidiarity. Problems that can be addressed at the local or national level should be addressed at this level.

A shift in political and economic power is also taking place. New markets are emerging. As I said before, this has been made even clearer by the recent economic and financial crisis, during which emerging markets proved more resilient than more mature economies. South-South trade and investment flows, as well as South-South cooperation are growing at an impressive pace. These economic trends are to be better reflected in the global governance system.

This contributes to making the global governance landscape more complex. Traditional multilateral institutions, like the UN and the Bretton Woods institutions, are criticized for not being efficient and representative enough.

It can seem easier and more expeditious to take urgent action in a more restricted forum. New actors, like the G20 and other ad hoc informal groups have emerged. Non governmental actors from the private sector and civil society are also playing an increasing role in shaping today's global world.

The point is not to deny the role of these actors. The economic and financial crisis has highlighted the importance of a rapid and coordinated response.

Yet, if we have to acknowledge that these restricted groupings can indeed act in an efficient manner, their inclusiveness and legitimacy on the other hand is questionable. We have to find the best possible articulation between efficiency as well as decisive action and legitimacy.

I am convinced that the United Nations and its General Assembly have a central role to play to capture the complexity of this new world and to shape a global governance structure that is efficient, open and representative.

The United Nations enjoys unique legitimacy. With its 192 Member States, the UN General Assembly is a near-universal body and reflects the diversity of situations and interests at stake. It is there to promote the rights of every woman and man on our planet. Any matters within the scope of the Charter may be discussed by the General Assembly. The United Nations, as an operational entity, also has the expertise and the presence in the field to be the central element of the global governance landscape.

It is also essential to establish a close connection between States and the private sector, civil society and regional actors. Representatives of Member States have to listen to other key actors and interact with them outside the walls of the General Assembly. We have to find the appropriate mechanisms for communication, consultation, and cooperation between the UN and these other actors of global governance.

In order to raise awareness and advance the discussion on global governance, I proposed to focus the general debate of the General Assembly which took place in New York at the end of September on this issue and to reflect more specifically on 'reaffirming the central role of the UN in global governance'.

I am satisfied that the topic has found significant resonance in the statements of the Member States. It clearly came out that the United Nations is the central forum for global governance but that urgent reforms need to be undertaken to make the organization fit for the job.

A strong United Nations requires a decisive effort to revitalize the General Assembly, to reform the Security Council and review the work of the Human Rights Council and Peacebuilding Commission. The economic bodies of the United Nations must also be strengthened, enabling them to fully serve the purpose for which they were established. I am committed that there will be progress on these reform processes during the 65th session of the General Assembly.

As a first practical step, in view of the next G20 Seoul summit, I organized an informal debate of the General Assembly with the Secretary-General and the G20 host country on 22 October. On the same model, a post-G20 meeting informal debate will take place at the General Assembly on 16 November.

In addition, an informal debate in the second half of my presidency could explore ways, in a more general sense, to shape a global governance system, that is more representative, inclusive and open.

Distinguished Members of Parliament,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The close collaboration of the Inter-Parliamentary Union that has taken place with the UN since the early 1990s has demonstrated the significant contribution of Parliaments to making international relations and decision-making more transparent and more effective.

As a former member of the Swiss Parliament and now as President of the UN General Assembly, I am particularly pleased to note how national Parliaments and the General Assembly can work fruitfully together. The Parliamentary Hearing that takes place each year at the General Assembly is one important opportunity for bringing our institutions even closer. I am looking forward to chairing this year's session which will be devoted to the discussion of the world recovery after the recent economic and financial crisis.

For now, I am looking forward to hearing your views about the agenda of the 65th session of the General Assembly.

Thank you.