

20 November 2008

**Statement of Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann,  
President of the 63rd Session of the General Assembly,  
on the Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly**

I have been looking forward to this opportunity to take up the issue of the revitalization of the General Assembly. We now come face to face with concrete proposals that will enable us to reassert the Assembly's responsibilities as the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative organ of the United Nations in the months ahead.

As you know, the democratization of the United Nations is the overarching priority of my presidency. I believe we need to take radical steps to regain the authority of the General Assembly so that it can perform its duties as the most democratic organ of the United Nations.

We are certainly the most representative body of the international system. But I don't think we can say we are the most democratic.

Yes, each Member State has a vote in the Assembly, and this is what makes it unique within the international community. But until the Assembly restores the authority assigned to it under the Charter, our democracy will fall short of exercising the real leadership that the world requires at this juncture in history. It is imperative to reestablish the balance among the principle organs of our Organization and to ensure that the powers assigned to each in the Charter are fully respected. This is what I see as the ultimate goal of this process of revitalization.

My predecessor wisely established the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the General Assembly to, among other things, identify ways to further enhance the role, authority, effectiveness and efficiency of the Assembly. For the first time, this report provides us with an overview of the recommendations and changes that have been made over the past 16 years of reform efforts.

We thank the Working Group for presenting us with its comprehensive review and now must implement the recommendations that will improve our working methods and efficiency. The report identifies changes that are already helping us to re-establish the Assembly's credibility as the chief deliberative and policy-making body. And we need to act on those resolutions that have not yet been implemented that will further streamline our work.

Before we consider the report prepared by the Ad Hoc Working Group, I would like to make some brief comments that will help us move forward to implement specific changes that I think we should and can institute during this 63rd session.

I think that we have clear opportunities to improve the exchange between the General Assembly and other organs of the United Nations and the broader UN specialized agencies that make up the UN system.

It has been recommended that the Assembly President meet on a monthly basis with the President of the Security Council to review its work plan and consult on specific issues of particular concern. I would suggest that this meeting take place with the entire Assembly to enable more direct and dynamic exchanges between the two organs. The same could be done with the President of the Economic and Social Council on a periodic basis, thus providing opportunities to create more synergy between the Assembly and ECOSOC.

I have perceived a sense of isolation in the specialized agencies, funds and programmes of the UN system in my contacts with colleagues from other duty stations. While they come together with the Secretary-General once a year, we would all benefit from briefings to the Assembly itself and could undoubtedly contribute to the important work they are doing. Let us find opportunities to host these exchanges so that they can be both informal, candid and provide real added value to our work.

We all agree that the procedures for selecting the Secretary-General should be formalized. The Secretariat is an enormously important organ of the United Nations and the Secretary-General should be selected in a transparent and inclusive process. Let us resolve to put into place procedures for timely review of candidates well before the next election. There are many resolutions cited in the report that will help us put together procedures and define important parameters for the position, including term length and possible re-election.

I am also inspired by the enthusiastic response to the exchange between the General Assembly and the panel of experts that we convened last month. These consultations on the international financial crisis brought all of us together to examine collaboratively both the urgency and magnitude of the problem and practical steps for dealing with them, resulting in the establishment of a high-level commission which will continue to provide guidance and innovative ideas for how the Assembly can contribute to the new international financial architecture that all of us recognize is needed.

The Assembly has demonstrated new agility in taking up urgent issues before us by drawing on the enormous reservoirs of expertise that exist within the UN system as well as experts in the field. No country alone can convene such diverse experts from around the world in such a timely manner. We must continue to seize these moments and organize meaningful and action-oriented responses.

So let us be practical in our response to this valuable report and identify the opportunities for immediate action. This will be the real measure of our vitality and of our determination to provide dynamic leadership expected of us.

Thank you.