

# United Nations Nations Unies

THE PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

LE PRESIDENT DE L'ASSEMBLEE GENERALE

12 September 2011

## **Statement of H.E. Mr. Joseph Deiss, President of the 65<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly, at the Closing of “Working together for humankind”**

Mr. Secretary-General,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great emotion that I speak to you for the last time in this General Assembly Hall. This year, we have been through intense times together. May I remind you that, on 14 September 2010, the representative of a now deposed regime handed over the gavel to me. How, several months earlier, could we have tolerated witnessing the tyrant who ruled that country scorn the values of the United Nations, in this very Hall, by throwing the Charter to the ground?

In what moment of distraction could we have elected that regime a member of the Human Rights Council? We responded. On 1 March 2011, when we suspended Libya from the Human Rights Council, we imposed the moral force of the United Nations before the eyes of the whole world. On that day, I said to you: " I am proud to be your President."

For that, and for all the progress achieved during this session, I thank you warmly, you, the representatives of the Member States, you the members of the General Committee, you the Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly, the Chairs of the Main Committees, the co-chairs and facilitators of working groups and various negotiating processes.

In particular, I wish to express my most sincere gratitude to our Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his tireless commitment in the service of the ideals of our Organization and for the excellent working relationship we have had during the year. Mr. Secretary-General, I am extremely happy that you were appointed for a second term during my Presidency and that I had the honour of administering the oath of office to you in this Hall. My best fondest wishes for your success are with you.

My thanks also go to the Secretariat, in particular to colleagues in the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, and to my Chef de Cabinet and my entire team who, from the first rays of dawn until late in the evening, helped me to carry out the activities of the Presidency.

Without your support, I would have nothing to report on today.

Mr. Secretary-General,  
 Excellencies,  
 Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have worked together this year for humankind. What have we accomplished?

Have we, during this year, ensured the progress of the ideals and values of our Organization and its Charter?

Have we met the expectations of all those who, the world over, in their daily lives, are searching for peace, security and dignity?

Have we been present and up to the task at the most critical moments of the year?

These are the questions that I would like to answer today. To do so, it seems to me, we must consider the progress made with respect to the major themes on the agenda of the sixty-fifth session and our capacity to be present in crisis situations.

#### 1. Major themes on the agenda of the sixty-fifth session

From the outset, in my opening statement for the session, I told you that we have an obligation to produce results. In order to focus our efforts and more effectively monitor progress in our work, I thought it would be useful to reorganize our agenda items into three thematic areas: first, poverty reduction and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals; next, the green economy and sustainable development; and lastly, global governance. I will consider them one by one.

With the High-level Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals, held at the beginning of the sixty-fifth session, we sent a strong message about our determination to keep our promise to halve poverty by 2015 and achieve all the other goals for the millennium. Five years away from the deadline, it was vital to clearly reaffirm our will to redouble our efforts to succeed. In May, the international community reiterated this message in Istanbul, at the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries. In Istanbul, emphasis was placed on financing and investing in productive capacities, and on the role of the private sector in development. As I see it, this is extremely heartening, for if we wish to consolidate progress made on the poverty eradication front, we must ensure that the conditions for sustainable and balanced growth likely to create decent jobs are in place. At the development dialogue, held in June, we launched the discussion on post-2015. Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, however encouraging and meaningful, will only take us to the midpoint. In 2015, we will have halved poverty in the world. That is significant, but we must not delay in taking on the other half. Let's be ready on time, without slackening our effort on the initiative under way. Let's think - starting now - about our strategy for what lies ahead. I am pleased that the General Assembly has begun this discussion. I am also pleased that the General Assembly, in particular by holding a special session in 2013, is ready to do its part in following up to ensure that a tangible difference is made in the daily lives of deprived populations.

Development-related topics have continued to be highlighted throughout the year. Another outstanding result of this session was the High-level Meeting on AIDS in early June, at which the international community reaffirmed its will to fight against this scourge and adopt new targets to realize the triple-zero vision: "zero new infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths".

Lastly, the High-level Meeting on Youth, held in New York at the end of July, addressed a particularly relevant issue in the context of the uprisings in the Arab world and elsewhere since the spring - that of better integration of youth in poverty eradication and the promotion of sustainable development.

This leads me to the second key thematic area on the agenda for this session: the green economy and sustainable development.

There too, the results are encouraging. The session opened with a High-level Meeting on Biodiversity, which contributed to the successful outcome of negotiations at the Nagoya Conference. It is a giant step forward for the preservation of our environment. Challenges affecting small island developing States, implementation of the Mauritius Strategy and disaster risk reduction were also given full attention.

I am particularly pleased that the discussion proceeded constructively on a topic that is particularly dear to my heart, for I am convinced that it is key to transitioning to a production and consumption pattern more respectful of the planet and its inhabitants, namely, the green economy. Thanks to the support of the Group of Friends of the Green Economy, thanks to the organization of a thematic debate, the issue has become less controversial and the possibilities for growth and job creation that a green economy can offer, even in the least developed countries, are more apparent. This is a useful contribution to the preparations for the Conference on Sustainable Development to be held in Rio in 2012.

Reaffirming the central role of the United Nations in global governance: that was the theme of our general debate and one of the overarching themes of the current session. At a time when challenges are increasingly global and demand coordinated and collective responses, we, the Member States, must not let the United Nations become marginalized by new actors in global governance, which may at times be more effective than the United Nations and its General Assembly but are lacking in legitimacy. In that context, and with a view to bringing the Group of 20 (G-20) and the United Nations closer together, we initiated a constructive dialogue with the G-20 Presidency, held first by the Republic of Korea, then by France. That dialogue must continue, particularly after the G-20 November Summit in Cannes. But to bestow full legitimacy on G-20 decisions, other mechanisms must be found. At the informal thematic debate on global governance in June, we had an opportunity to reflect further on this matter. By resolution 65/94, adopted in December 2010, deliberations on the place of the United Nations in global governance can continue beyond this session.

The continuation of work on internal reforms to our Organization is equally imperative and urgent. Encouraging steps have been taken: thus, we have completed the review of the work of the Peacebuilding Commission and of the Human rights Council. But important work is under way and must not be abandoned. I am thinking, first of all, of the revitalization of the General Assembly but also of the reform of the Security Council. I am pleased at the initiation of a discussion that goes beyond entrenched positions, particularly thanks to your support for the President's Group of Friends. I

regret, however, that a significant breakthrough, one that would give rise to genuine negotiations, has yet to occur. For the credibility of the United Nations, for the credibility of its Member States, this key question cannot be deferred from session to session. The role of the United Nations in global political governance is at stake; the conditions for peace and security that affect millions of men, women and children in all parts of the world are at stake. As for our place in economic global governance, beyond the dialogue with the G-20, it can be strengthened by thoroughly reforming the Economic and Social Council, by refocusing the Council's mandate and by improving its economic competence.

## 2. Presence in crisis situations

Mr. Secretary-General,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

That is the overall agenda. But what about our capacity to be present for what is not planned, in crises, revolts, disasters that harm the dignity of populations, that violate the rights of peoples and threaten their very existence? How have we met their expectations? Have we given them a vision of a force for peace, generosity and hope? Have we proved to them that we are this force for peace, generosity and hope?

Our commitment in the name of the values of the United Nations has sometimes been too weak or come too late, but overall, our Organization, carried by the will of Member States, within various intergovernmental organs, has assumed its responsibilities. In so doing, it has effectively affirmed that it is a major actor in global governance. I am pleased. The General Assembly has played its role in the strengthening of the United Nations as a moral force, as a force for the protection of civilian populations and their rights, peaceful settlement of conflicts and friendship among peoples.

Thus, we drew attention to the plight of Haiti by holding an informal plenary meeting at the beginning of this year. Thus, during the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire, we came to a rapid decision about who was the legitimate representative to the United Nations. Thus, in the face of the uprisings that shook the Arab world, we sent a strong message and suspended Libya's right to hold a seat on the Human Rights Council. Through thematic debates and dialogues, the General Assembly was present in such crucial issues as the rule of law and the responsibility to protect and could draw the first lessons from the explicit reference to that responsibility in Security Council resolution 1973(2011).

During the elections to the Human Rights Council, we avoided the errors of the past. Members of the Human Rights Council must be exemplary and apply the highest standards of respect for and promotion of human rights.

Lastly, and this was a moment of great emotion and immense satisfaction, the admission of the Republic of South Sudan as the 193rd member of the General Assembly in early July marked the culmination of a process of peaceful resolution of a long and deadly conflict. I call on all actors to work for a lasting peace in the region.

We have accomplished much. Undoubtedly, we could have done more. The situation in the Middle East remains unstable; in many parts of the world, conflicts are ongoing; far too many human beings on

this planet are living in precarious conditions. In all these situations, we do not have the right to remain indifferent.

As my Presidency comes to an end, I wish to leave you with a few recommendations that seem particularly important to me if the United Nations is to be strong and capable of making a difference:

- first, we must determine the common interest;
- second, we must defend basic values;
- third, we must respond to the real concerns of peoples.

To be more present in the major issues of our time, the common interest must prevail over national interest. The major challenges before humankind can be solved only insofar as we are able to determine a common interest and a common strategy for achieving it.

Too often, we are reluctant to abandon purely national short-term issues. What is worse, crucial debates on issues that are fundamental for the poorest and most vulnerable among us are hostage to electoralist positions and hidden agendas. This tendency breeds double standards.

And often, our deliberations remain too remote from the concerns of the public; to outsiders, they are abstract, even incomprehensible. Some of our battles may seem futile to those who live under oppression, or in insecurity, extreme poverty and conditions devoid of human dignity.

Mr. Secretary-General,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At times during this sixty-fifth session, I have asked myself: at what point does outrage to human dignity and the suffering of peoples finally become so great that we are forced to condemn it, to act? For I am convinced that for all human beings whose dignity has been harmed or whose integrity is threatened, whether in Syria or elsewhere in the world, the Assembly of peoples that we constitute must at least be a moral refuge, reassuring them that their cause is not forgotten, that we uphold their aspirations and that they have the right to hope.

The sixty-fifth session is nearing an end and much remains to be done, but I am confident. I extend my very best wishes for the success of the sixty-sixth session and its Presidency and hope that, thanks to the General Assembly, we, the States Members of the United Nations, can continue to work together for humankind.

In closing, I wish to quote former Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld. It is now 50 years since his death. "Never measure the height of a mountain until you have reached the top. Then you will see how low it was," he said. No obstacle is insurmountable for those who wish to succeed. We should never forget that.