

6 March 2012

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser,  
President of the 66<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly,  
at the Federal Belgium Parliament**

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to address the Federal Belgium Parliament in this historic building.

I thank Mrs. Sabine de Bethune, President of the Senate of the Federal Parliament for this special invitation.

Belgium is an important player at the UN.

Belgium is also an important host for regional and sub-regional arrangements.

With this in mind, I am holding a number of important meetings in Brussels, aimed at enhancing cooperation between these arrangements and the United Nations General Assembly.

These meetings are particularly focused on sustainable development and maintaining international peace and security.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Belgium's deep commitment to multilateralism is essential as we work together towards building consensus and a united global partnership.

Your engagement with the development activities of the UN helps support the principles and objectives enshrined in the UN Charter.

Your emphasis on and support for mediation efforts, which is my main theme for this session of the General Assembly, is significant.

Such efforts are particularly important at this critical juncture in world history.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to briefly share with you my main concerns, which are of mutual interest to Belgium and the UN.

The first, and one of the most urgent issues before us, relates to the situation in the Middle East.

It is not only the escalating Arab Israeli conflict, I refer as well to the devastating events in Syria.

The conditions in Syria are terrible.

This was highlighted last week at the Human Rights Council in Geneva, at its Opening Session and its Special Session on Syria, both of which I addressed.

I am convinced that the international community has a responsibility to act through the UN.

After the inability of the Security Council to have a position on this issue, I organized a formal meeting of the General Assembly on the 13th of February.

At this meeting, Mrs Navi Pillay, High Commissioner for Human Rights, briefed the Member States about the deteriorating human rights situation in Syria.

Following that momentum, the General Assembly adopted by a large majority, a resolution supporting the Arab League's plan, and giving a mandate of good offices to the Secretary-General.

I am pleased that the implementation of this resolution began quickly, with the appointment of former United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, as the UN-Arab League Joint Special Envoy for Syria.

I encourage all Member States to support the Special Envoy, and to stand behind the people of Syria.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I have identified four main pillars to help guide the work of the Assembly this session.

The first is "The peaceful settlement of disputes".

The world today is increasingly complex. The role of mediation is therefore more relevant than ever before.

I am pleased to note that, at present, there is international momentum building around mediation.

In June 22nd, 2011, the General Assembly adopted its first-ever resolution on mediation. It was also fitting that this resolution was adopted on the same day I was elected President of the General Assembly.

Belgium contributed to the success of this landmark resolution.

To help support the Membership in its work, I suggested the theme “The role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes” for the General Debate last September.

I was overwhelmed by the positive response to this theme by world leaders, including from Belgium.

Belgium’s announcement during the debate of its support to strengthening the UN’s mediation efforts was most welcomed.

A number of important events on mediation have been held since September.

To build on these efforts, I will convene on 23 May, 2012 a high-level meeting of the General Assembly in New York, with a focus on the role of Member States in mediation.

Turning to my second pillar: UN reform and revitalization.

I think many would agree that we must reform the UN, so that it can meet the realities and challenges of the 21st Century.

So that the UN remains effective, relevant and legitimate in today’s interconnected world.

Parliaments have a key role to play in ensuring that international commitments become local realities.

Implementation of General Assembly resolutions is central to this process.

This session, I am devoting my particular attention to the important role of parliamentarians and civil society actors in translating international commitments into national legislation and policies.

I have convened, and will continue to convene, meetings to serve this purpose.

I will also organize a number of retreats on other issues related to UN reform and revitalization.

These will include Security Council reform and the internal working methods of the General Assembly’s Administrative and Budgetary Committee- the Fifth Committee.

My third pillar this session is “Improving disaster prevention and response”.

To consider how we can best support and advance efforts to integrate disaster risk reduction into sustainable development work, I will host a thematic debate on this issue in April.

Another event will also be organized in July, on water and disasters.

My fourth and final pillar is “Sustainable development and global prosperity”.

As we prepare for the UN Conference on Sustainable Development – Rio +20 - and as we consider the MDGs landscape post-2015, I will hold several informal meetings and retreats to help build consensus and bolster the preparations.

These informal meetings will include a thematic debate on the “Road to Rio and beyond” on the 4th of April, to build on the conclusion of the retreat I convened last December on the same topic.

I look forward to Belgium’s continuing support for developing countries, especially Least Developed Countries and Landlocked Developing Countries.

Another critical issue within this pillar is the state of the world economy.

As the world needs a positive and encouraging message to address this issue, I will host a high-level thematic debate on the State of the World Economy on 17-18 May.

The United Nations Secretary-General has been invited to co-chair with me this event.

It is my intention that the summary of the debate will contribute to international efforts to secure a sustained recovery of the world economy.

I hope that Belgium will participate in this important event, at the highest level.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I look forward to continuing to work with Belgium, as we strive to build a more peaceful, prosperous and just world for all.

Thank you.