

2 April 2013

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Vuk Jeremić,
President of the 67th Session of the General Assembly,
at the First Meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the
Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly**

Excellencies,
Distinguished Representatives,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my distinct honor to address the first meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly.

I have asked my good friend, H.E. Mr. Mootaz Ahmadein Khalil, the Permanent Representative of Egypt one of the ablest diplomats I have met in my career so far to help me in this critical endeavor.

Ambassador Khalil has proposed a plan of work, organized into four clusters. I strongly support this framework, and respectfully urge Member States to actively engage in this process.

Excellencies,

The first cluster is focused on the General Assembly's role and responsibilities, as well as its relationship to the other principal organs of the United Nations and regional organizations.

The second relates to significant technical matters, such as working methods, implementation of resolutions, and agenda streamlining, in addition to discussing options for more time-conscious and secure balloting in the plenary.

The third revolves around a consideration of the role of the General Assembly in the selection of the Secretary-General, as well as other executive heads within the UN System.

The fourth cluster includes an examination of the functions of the Office of the President of the General Assembly, its relationship with the Secretariat, and ways in which the Office's institutional memory can be enhanced. Within this context, the Group will also look at options for increasing the assignment of permanent UN staff Office of the PGA, as well as its level of funding.

I believe that the current apportionment is manifestly inadequate.

For most small- and medium-sized countries particularly those from the developing world this one-year position is perhaps the most important multilateral post for which they have the opportunity to run.

In deliberating whether to present a candidature for PGA, no Member State should be constrained by the possible financial implications of victory.

In my view, this constitutes an undue burden. In this institution, where each member is equal to every other, all must have an equal opportunity to exercise the duties of the PGA to the best of their ability, not their country's capacity to finance them.

I therefore respectfully appeal to this Group to make a strong recommendation to level the fiscal playing field, by calling for a larger allocation of funds from the regular UN budget to be granted to the Office of the President.

Excellencies,

I strongly believe that revitalization is fundamentally about empowering the Member States to make the fullest possible use of the broad capacities provided by the Charter to the General Assembly.

For decades, the great promise made in 1945 could not be fulfilled in its entirety. Even today, all the aims of the UN's founders have not been fully met.

The contemporary world is in the midst of one of the most profound, all-encompassing periods of transformation ever to occur in peacetime. We don't have a clear picture of what it will look like when the dust finally settles.

Its contours, however, are starting to come into focus. Nations and peoples across the globe aspire to have a larger say in how their destiny will be shaped.

They also seek to exercise greater independence of action a result of two related factors. First, a resurging devotion to a basic tenet of this Organization: sovereign equality; and, second, a burgeoning emphasis on its corollary: universal adherence to accepted principles and norms in the conduct of international relations.

These are but some of the reasons why our efforts are assuming greater significance rapidly.

Perhaps the most critical one takes as its starting point the fact that last June in Rio de Janeiro, world leaders tasked the General Assembly to assume primary responsibility for conceptualizing a universal transition to sustainability.

Excellencies,

This is a strategic issue of the first order one that will frame much of the UN's work for decades to come.

It is up to the Member States, and the Member States alone, to fulfill the mandate of the "Future We Want" concluding document: to define and adopt the SDGs, agree on options for financing them, and

conceive a workable intergovernmental arrangement for monitoring their implementation in addition to deciding on actions that need to be taken to complete the MDG process.

The international community has rarely done anything quite so difficult the General Assembly surely never has.

Yet this is exactly what we need to do over the next thousand days.

This is the moment to start crafting a new, ambitious global framework at the heart of which will stand the General Assembly.

Excellencies,

Over the past decade, the General Assembly has recognized the value of thematic debates to the process of revitalization. In resolution 60/298 of 2006, it first mandated the PGA to propose topics, indicating that each should revolve around “an issue of critical importance.”

I believe that every thematic debate should be seen as a unique opportunity for Member States to exchange views, as true equals, on a key subject affecting the international community as a whole.

I therefore strongly encourage all of you not only to participate but to speak up. To proudly state one’s principled case, and to hear frank and open responses.

There should be no taboo subjects in the General Assembly especially in the context of thematic debates.

Over the course of this month, three of them will be held.

The first will take place on April 10th, and will examine the “Role of International Criminal Justice in Reconciliation.” Two decades have passed since the establishment of the inaugural UN ad hoc tribunal, and ten years since the entry into force of the Rome Statute establishing the ICC. This is the first time a discussion will take place in the plenary to examine long-term impacts of international criminal justice on reconciliation efforts. I hope that we will be able to discuss freely whether there are any lessons to be learned, and best practices to be applied in the future.

Next, the plenary will come together on April 15th to discuss the “UN and Global Economic Governance.” This thematic debate will focus on how significant economic actors, including IFIs as well as informal groupings such as the G20, may interact with the rest of the world in the future. I have underscored the fact that the General Assembly can provide a unique platform to exchange views and share information on common economic concerns. This one-day discussion is designed to complement existing international efforts to achieve what a very recent Report by the Secretary-General defined as a “more participatory system of global economic governance.”

A third thematic debate will be held on April 25th on the “Peaceful Resolution of Conflicts in Africa,” in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Organization of African Unity the precursor to the African Union. The occasion will provide the General Assembly with an opportunity to reflect on the remarkable journey the continent has made over the past five decades. It will also enable us to take stock of various efforts to address current challenges, and point at ways in which the UN can further strengthen its cooperation with African Member States and regional organizations in the period before us.

Excellencies,

The process of revitalization can help lay the foundation for a grand re-organization of human affairs, and ensure the General Assembly becomes the key source of legitimacy for the international community.

In the time ahead, the UN’s ‘chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ’ should become a true, universal Parliament of Nations a conclave of humanity where the world’s most important issues are discussed and decisions taken.

I believe this is a condition sine qua non for an international system that aspires to justice, and pledges not only equal rights to all nations, but aims to safeguard their equal dignity as well.

Excellencies,

In 1961, one of the greatest statesmen of the 20th century, John F. Kennedy, gave a visionary speech before the General Assembly. It is with his words, as relevant today as when they were spoken more than half a century ago, that I would like to come to the conclusion of my remarks.

This institution, he said, “will either grow to meet the challenges of our age, or it will be gone with the wind, without influence, without force, without respect. Were we to let it die, to enfeeble its vigor, to cripple its powers,” he continued. “we would condemn our future. [...] To make meaningful the moral force of the world community, development [has to] become a cooperative and not a competitive enterprise to enable all nations, however diverse in their systems and beliefs, to become in fact as well as in law free and equal nations.”

Thank you for your attention.