

30 September 2014

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa,
President of the 69th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Closing of the General Debate**

**Excellencies,
Secretary-General,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Throughout the past week, we gathered here in this newly renovated Hall to share our hopes and visions for the future. We collectively reflected on the challenges confronting us, as well as the opportunities we must harness, both as individual societies and members of the greater world community.

I thank each and every speaker who participated in this General Debate for taking the time to address this august body at this pivotal moment in the Organization's history. The participation of 117 Heads of State and Government, three Vice-Presidents, eight Deputy Prime Ministers, 56 Ministers, seven Chairs of delegation, one Head of State and one Head of Government of Observer States, and one Observer, attests to the importance and value Member States and observers attach to the organization.

I will briefly highlight some of major issues examined during this Debate, and which deserve our attention over the next 12 months.

Many speakers focused their remarks on this year's General Debate theme; "Delivering on and implementing a Transformative Post-2015 Development Agenda". They stressed the need to build on the successes and momentum of the Millennium Development Goals and formulate an ambitious, inclusive and transformative development agenda that will produce tangible benefits and improve the livelihoods of all peoples.

Delegations highlighted the importance of placing the eradication of poverty and hunger at the core of the post-2015 development agenda. The need for adequate means of implementation for the new development agenda, in terms of financial resources, technology development and transfer and capacity building, was underscored.

Several speakers stressed the need for fulfilling Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) commitments, and called for an enhanced global partnership for development. The important role that the private sector, civil society and multi-stakeholder groups should play was also emphasized.

Many delegations called for a fairer global trading regime and continued reform of institutions of global economic governance and international financial institutions to make them more responsive to the needs of all countries, especially developing countries.

Peace and security issues featured prominently throughout the Debate, with many speakers expressing grave concern about the increasing threat posed by terrorist and extremist groups such as ISIS, Al Qaeda, Al Shabaab, Boko Haram and others. Underlining the need to address the danger posed by terrorists, world leaders called for a unified global response to effectively combat them. Many speakers emphasized that such groups were not merely regional challenges, but posed a serious danger to international peace and security.

The need to further strengthen cooperation between the UN and regional and sub-regional organizations, to optimize synergy and respective capacities, was emphasized.

On health issues, the rampant spread of Ebola in West Africa took great prominence during the Debate, with many speakers urging immediate, coordinated action to stem the outbreak.

Delegations expressed serious concern about the catastrophic loss of life caused by Ebola as well as unrest, social tension and negative impact on political and socio-economic progress in the affected countries of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. The devastation Ebola had inflicted on already fragile healthcare systems in the affected countries was of particular concern.

Leaders pledged their support to the Secretary-General's newly-established United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER), and welcomed the national, regional and international efforts to combat Ebola.

Many delegations stressed the need to pay greater attention to combating HIV/AIDS, Malaria, Tuberculosis as well as other communicable and non-communicable diseases.

Excellencies,

The high level of unemployment rates was also a key focal point throughout the Debate, with many expressing concern over the destabilizing effects of persistent unemployment.

Many speakers said increasing levels of youth unemployment were especially troubling, and called for strategies and policies to create more employment opportunities.

While recognising that some progress has been made on promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment, many speakers underscored the need for greater attention and action on these issues.

A number of delegations stressed that without the active participation of women in all facets of life, societies would continue to fall short of their full potential. Increasing safe and equal access to education for girls was another common theme.

On the environment, speakers stressed the need for comprehensive action on climate change. They called for a unified approach to address climate change, as time was running out to address threats such as pollution, rising sea levels, desertification and land degradation. Many delegations welcomed the Secretary-General's Climate Summit initiative and called for commitment towards conclusion of a global agreement in 2015 under the auspices of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

The need to promote the rule of law, good governance and respect for human rights as prerequisites for the achievement of sustainable development, was emphasized. Delegations noted that respect for international law, norms and principles were critical for international peace and security. On human rights, several speakers emphasized the central role of human rights as one of the United Nations pillars, noting that discrimination based on religion, gender or any other consideration should not be tolerated.

Many delegations called for Security Council reform and revitalization of the General Assembly. Speakers emphasized that Security Council membership did not adequately reflect today's realities and called for a more representative Council.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The General Debate continues to serve as an opportunity for the international community to come together under one roof to explore the world's current state of affairs. It is a one-of-a-kind opportunity for Member States to share with a worldwide audience their accomplishments, ambitions, hopes and fears.

The General Debate is indeed the world's premier political global stage. It serves as a unique opportunity to recall the intrinsic value of our mutual engagement in the work of this Organization.

I would like to suggest that in the future, we consider rationalizing the number of meetings and side events held in the margins of the General Debate to enable greater focus on the matters being discussed here.

Let me take this opportunity to urge each and every one of you to approach our work over the next year with a spirit of cooperation and optimism, inspired by the belief that together, we can make a difference.

As we have seen during the General Debate, we certainly have our work cut out for us. Most importantly, we need to formulate an ambitious, inclusive transformative agenda and accompany it with adequate means for its implementation.

Let us take on this responsibility and all the challenges we must address with a whole-hearted belief that as a unified body, we can make real and meaningful change in the livelihoods of humanity and the health of our planet.

Thank you for your attention.