

21 October 2020

Excellencies,

Last week marked my 30 days in office as the President of the seventy-fifth session of the United Nations General Assembly, and 60 days since I arrived in New York to start preparing for this session.

I would like to take this opportunity to share with the membership some of my reflections so far and to provide updates regarding some of the key activities my Office is currently working on for the upcoming weeks and months.

**In retrospect:**

First of all, despite the challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, I have had the opportunity to personally meet almost all of you, and I am grateful for all the support I have received from Member States thus far, including contributions to the Trust Fund and the provision of secondees to my Office.

I am delighted that we had a very successful High-level fortnight and we are able to meet in person again at the UN Headquarters, including in the General Assembly Hall. I would like to thank all the delegations and the UN staff that have made this possible.

During the ***High-level fortnight***, in addition to a General Debate that featured speeches from the highest number of Heads of State and Government in the UN's history, we also held High-level meetings to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the United Nations, first ever UN Summit on Biodiversity, 25th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing 25+) and finally the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

Through their active participation in these meetings, and the adoption of the Declaration on the Commemoration of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations, Member States demonstrated their strong and continued commitment to multilateralism, with the United Nations at its core.

For the multilateral system to deliver, the General Assembly must be able to ***perform its duties in any given circumstance***. I am pleased to see that consensus on this issue is growing among Member States. I urge you to turn this consensus into action, so we do not face any further disruptions to our critical work. With your contribution and cooperation, I am confident that the seventy-fifth session will be a success.

I chaired the first in person meeting of the **General Committee** since the start of the pandemic on 16 September 2020, where the provisional agenda for the seventy-fifth session and recommendations to the General Assembly on its working methods were adopted.

The General Assembly held its **17<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting** on 21 October 2020 and successfully conducted **in person elections** for the members of the Human Rights Council.

In order to support the **Main Committees**, which I consider to be the engine of GA work, I held several coordination meetings with their Chairs and addressed the delegates in Committee meetings. My support will continue until the successful completion of their deliberations in this session.

Since my nomination for the position of the President of the General Assembly, I have been a strong advocate of close **cooperation and collaboration between the principal organs** of the Organization.

I am pleased to report that I was able to carry out this commitment in the first month of the seventy-fifth session, also thanks to the amenable approach of the heads of other principal organs. Since my assumption of office, I initiated and held **three coordination meetings** of this kind. First **with the President of the Security Council** for the month of September, **President of ECOSOC** and the **Secretary-General**; second with the **President of the Security Council** for the month of October and the **Secretary General**; and third, separately with the **President of ECOSOC**. I was also pleased to have a useful exchange of views with the **President of International Court of Justice**.

### **Looking Ahead in the seventy-fifth session**

In my Vision Statement, I outlined among my priorities the promotion of **Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women**. I am therefore pleased to announce that I am currently forming an **Advisory Group on Gender**, in order to bring critical thought, analysis, and support on gender issues to bolster my work throughout the seventy-fifth session. The Advisory Group will be composed of respected and competent individuals with understanding and expertise on the United Nations mandate on gender equality and women's empowerment.

Also, as part my efforts to focus on the issues faced by the countries in special situations— the 91 **most vulnerable Member States**, I am establishing a **Board of Advisors on Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries, and Small Island Developing States**, to provide comprehensive and consolidated institutional support in framing our engagements for the session, noting that several of the mandates entrusted to me are at the heart of development for these most vulnerable countries.

In the coming months, I will convene or actively engage in the preparations of a number of high-level meetings as mandated in relevant GA resolutions.

I will preside over **two UN General Assembly Special Sessions**, on COVID-19 pandemic, and corruption, respectively.

Regarding the *Special Session on COVID-19*, the co-facilitators, Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan and Deputy Permanent Representative of Canada, have made great progress in resolving any outstanding differences among Member States regarding the modalities. This Special Session, which is planned for 3-4 December 2020, subject to the decision of membership, is a historic opportunity to galvanize concerted action to defeat COVID19, strengthen multilateral cooperation and put the world back on track towards achieving the SDGs.

At the *second Special Session on 2-4 June 2021*, Member States will discuss *corruption*. The full and effective implementation of the obligations of the United Nations Convention against Corruption is the best way to combat this problem. I am looking forward to hearing Member States` views on the challenges and measures to prevent and combat corruption and strengthen international cooperation.

Below is a non-exhaustive list of *other high-level meetings and processes* that I will convene or engage during the seventy-fifth session:

- A Meeting to commemorate the 25th Anniversary of World Summit for *Social Development* in early December;
- Together with the President of ECOSOC, a *joint half-day thematic event* to provide substantive input to the upcoming Fifth Conference *on Least Developed Countries*;
- A high-level meeting on *middle-income countries* in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the *first quarter of 2021*;
- The Midterm Review of the International Decade for the *People of African Descent* in March 2021;
- The annual High-level Debate on *Urban Crime* in Spring 2021;
- A one-day High-level Event to discuss the *contribution of culture to the achievement of sustainable development* in the formulation of national, regional and international development policies and international cooperation instruments;
- A one-day High-level Meeting to promote the implementation of the *water-related goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda*;
- A High-level Dialogue to assess the progress made in the fight against *Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought*, and map the way forward in view of the end of the UN Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification;
- The finalization of the *political declaration of the 2<sup>nd</sup> UN Ocean Conference* and the conclusion of its preparatory process, in consultation with the co-hosts Portugal and Kenya;
- A high-level meeting to *review the progress on the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS* in June 2021;

- A series of initiatives and strategic engagements called '*Road to Kunming (COP15)*', that will include engagements with various Communities of Action from youth, to private sector leaders, and from PRs to Intergovernmental Organisations.

- **Preparations for the International Migration Review** meeting, to take place during seventy-sixth session.

As per established practice and based on the relevant mandates, I will also be announcing the *appointments of co-facilitators* for a variety of General Assembly processes in the coming weeks, based on my consultations with the membership and respecting the geographical and gender balance.

I also intend to start my **Morning Dialogues** with the Permanent Representatives in small groups before the end of October and continue this fruitful practice until the end of session.

Excellencies,

In all these endeavours, I will remain ready and continue to consult, discuss and benefit from the advice of the Member States. I am counting on your valuable support to ensure that our General Assembly continues to deliver for the people we serve.

Lastly, I would like to share herewith *the first Newsletter* that my Office has prepared in order to summarize the General Assembly's work and my activities last month.

Please accept, Excellencies, the assurances of my highest consideration.



Volkan BOZKIR

**Encl: Newsletter**