



H.E. Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa

Acceptance speech upon his election as President

New York, 11 June 2014

Almost 70 years ago, this Organization, the United Nations, was founded with the aim of, among other things, saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war, reaffirming faith in fundamental human rights and promoting social progress and better standards of living in larger freedom. It has since remained central to global efforts to find solutions to the problems that challenge humanity, through the common endeavour of all States.

Fifty-two years ago, my country, Uganda, joined the United Nations family. We are an active and fully committed Member of the Organization, and committed even more to the work of the General Assembly. I am therefore honoured and truly grateful to all here for unanimously electing me as President of the Assembly at its sixty-ninth session, a sign not only of the Assembly's collective trust and confidence in me personally, but also of recognition of the contribution that Uganda has made. I would especially like to thank my region, Africa, for endorsing my candidature and for the unwavering support it has given me.

Mr. President, I thank you for your leadership and for setting the stage during the current session. A number of intergovernmental processes are ongoing, and will feed into negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda. I also appreciate your willingness to facilitate transition and continuity in the Office of the President of the General Assembly.

I would like to thank and commend the Secretary-General for his personal commitment, dedication and tireless work in advancing the agenda of the United Nations. I look forward to working with everyone on our Organization's priorities.

As we gather here today, our world continues to be confronted with various challenges of global reach and impact. They include poverty and hunger; underdeveloped education and health services; unemployment; poor and inadequate infrastructure in many developing countries; insufficient and

expensive energy; climate change and rising sea levels; armed conflicts; and emerging threats to peace and security such as transnational organized crime, terrorism, piracy and human trafficking. Collectively, we must continue to take concerted action to address those challenges. That is what has made the United Nations a strong, unique and indispensable organization.

Fourteen years ago, world leaders adopted the Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2), committing to achieve eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015, with a focus on socioeconomic development issues such as poverty, health and education. While significant progress has been made in some areas, it has been uneven across goals, countries and regions. As we work on a post-2015 development agenda, we must ensure that the sustainable development goals being formulated build on the foundation laid by the MDGs. It is also essential that we develop an agenda that is transformative, with the eradication of poverty and hunger and the promotion of sustained and inclusive economic growth as its overarching objectives. It should be holistic, action-oriented and universally applicable, while paying due attention to the various regional and national realities as well as levels of development.

As part of the post-2015 development agenda, we will have to address means of implementation in terms of financial resources, technology development and transfer and capacity-building. That will require a strengthened global partnership, one that will foster partnerships between and among Governments, provide for an increased role for the private sector, ensure a fair international trading regime and foster national and foreign direct investments. Our ultimate objective should be to create a transformative agenda that supports global solutions, guides national development efforts and empowers people to improve their livelihoods and determine their own future.

Climate change, which continues largely unabated, is one of the defining global challenges of our time.

Its adverse effects are evident in persistent extreme weather conditions, floods, extended droughts and rising sea levels. There can be no doubt that those effects threaten humankind's very existence. Small island States in particular are becoming increasingly vulnerable. To preserve planet Earth for ourselves and succeeding generations, we have an obligation to combat climate change, through, among other things, mitigation and adaptation measures. Climate-change financing and technology transfer will be particularly central to that cause. It is therefore important that during the sixty-ninth session we give appropriate impetus and momentum to the ongoing process under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in order to reach a global agreement on climate change in 2015.

The coming year will be of historic significance, since it will mark the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations. Today, the world is vastly different from what it was in 1945. While the principles of the Organization remain solid, the changing world obliges us to adjust to new and changing realities. Central to that is the continued revitalization of the General Assembly and the reform of the Security Council and other relevant United Nations bodies. The intergovernmental negotiation process on Security Council reform has not yet made the desired progress. I will be working with every Member State to make further progress on this particular issue.

At the operational level, experience has shown that fostering cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations positively contributes to development and the maintenance of peace and security. We have seen many successes in many parts of the world, especially Africa, where the United Nations and various regional organizations have utilized their unique and complementary capacities to resolve conflicts. I am convinced that this cooperation has yet to reach its full potential and should be substantially strengthened. I also believe that we should strengthen cooperation and coordination among regional organizations themselves to address common challenges.

We should make greater efforts and launch more initiatives aimed at achieving the peaceful settlement of disputes, as envisaged in Article 33 of the Charter of the United Nations. Conflict prevention is a cheaper and more sustainable option.

In post-conflict situations, we need to step up peace-building efforts and support countries in building effective national institutions. That is essential for

avoiding relapse and for enabling those countries to move towards sustainable peace, reconstruction, economic recovery and development.

We should also strengthen our collective resolve to counter the forces that fuel polarization and extremism. That tension has often manifested itself in violent terrorist attacks, serving as a constant reminder of the threat of extremist ideology. The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations is an important initiative aimed at improving tolerance, understanding and cooperative relations among nations and peoples across cultures and religions. I will support further enhancement of the Alliance's role towards that end.

I will focus on further advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women in the sixty-ninth session, during which we will mark the twentieth anniversary of the groundbreaking Beijing meeting that provided a framework and road map for promoting women's rights and achieving gender equality. Since 1995, the United Nations and the international community have made significant progress in advancing gender equality, but there remains a lot of work to be done.

That reminds me of the experience of one Nabanja, a married woman and mother of four children in Kashongi village in my parliamentary constituency, who acquired land with her husband in 2010. Two weeks ago, in my constituency, Nabanja told me that her husband had sold the land without her knowledge, leaving her and her children with no home or means of survival. There are several such examples the world over that put in sharp focus the need to seize this historic opportunity to galvanize action and mobilize all actors for accelerated and effective advancement of gender equality and the empowerment of women under the leadership of UN-Women.

I will be sharing with the General Assembly, in due course, my proposals on how to effectively move all the aforementioned priorities forward, with its support.

I am proposing the theme for the sixty-ninth session to be "Delivering on and implementing a transformative post-2015 development agenda". The theme builds on the important work and progress being made in the current session. It underscores the need to focus not only on delivering or agreeing the post-2015 development agenda, but also, most importantly, on ensuring its effective implementation.

I am motivated by putting people at the centre of everything we do. I am motivated by the need for

socioeconomic transformation. I look forward to working with the General Assembly to develop an agenda that will eradicate poverty and hunger and create sustained and inclusive growth, employment and better livelihoods for all.

In that endeavour, we can all draw inspiration from the words of the late President Nelson Mandela, who, in his speech at an event of the “Campaign to Make Poverty History” held in London in 2005, said,

“Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice. It is the protection of a fundamental human right, the right to dignity and a decent life. While poverty persists, there is no true freedom.”

We truly have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to build “the future we want”. Fifty-one years ago, in 1963, President John F. Kennedy in his address to the General Assembly in this Hall said:

“Never before has man had such capacity to control his own environment: to end thirst and hunger; to conquer poverty and disease, to banish illiteracy and massive human misery. We have the power to make this the best generation of mankind in the history of the world—or to make it the last.”

(A/PV.1209, p. 6)

If that was applicable to his generation 51 years ago, it is even more applicable to today’s generation. The scale and reach of most of the challenges we face, coupled with the limited capacity of many of those worst affected, requires that we address them collectively. The United Nations exists to find solutions through our combined efforts.

I will endeavour to guide the work of the General Assembly in an active and effective manner. My pledge to the Assembly is my firm commitment to being accessible, transparent, fair and balanced, and I count on its support and cooperation.



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