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Member States Resume Discussions on General Assembly Revitalization 26 November 2007

On Monday 26 November 2007, the President of the General Assembly, H.E. Mr. Sgrjan Kerim chaired a debate in the General Assembly on the issue of revitalization of the General Assembly. Subsequently, Ambassador Andrzej Towpik of Poland, and Ambassador Eladio Loizaga of Paraguay, were appointed co-Chairs for the ad-hoc working group on the revitalization of the General Assembly, which is expected to convene shortly. The GA President used this opportunity to announce that he would convene debates on counter-terrorism in December, on climate change in February 2008, and on management reform in April. The following is an update of the meeting

In his opening [statement](#), the President of the General Assembly Sgrjan Kerim affirmed the role of the Assembly as the chief deliberative organ of the United Nations, but cautioned that “To promote more effective multilateralism, to find global solutions to global problems, it is incumbent upon all of us to bolster the authority and international standing of this Assembly.”

In doing so, Mr. Kerim suggested that the General Assembly could be:

- more of a dialogue, not a monologue;
- more focused on substantive results;
- more engaging and insightful; and,
- exemplify this through greater cooperation and mutual respect.

And he called on Member States, as the driving forces of the Assembly, to work together in this manner, so that results could be achieved on important issues like the Millennium Development Goals, Security Council and Management reform as well as the Mandate Review.

“This means that on System-wide Coherence for example, the practical success of the ‘pilot’ countries at the country level should sway the opinion of the Assembly in New York, rather than the other way around.”

Moreover, Mr. Kerim added that the Assembly President’s budget should be financed entirely from the regular budget, as that would enhance the Office’s accountability to Member States.

In quoting resolution 61/292, he said that an ad hoc working group on the revitalization of the General Assembly would be established under the leadership of co-Chairs Ambassador Andrzej Towpik, Permanent Representative of Poland, and Ambassador Eladio Loizaga, Permanent Representative of Paraguay.

The goal of the working group would be to “evaluate and assess the status of implementation of relevant resolutions, to identify ways to further enhance the role, authority, effectiveness and efficiency of the Assembly, inter alia, by building on previous resolutions, and to submit a report thereon to the Assembly. It could also consider other practical steps to improve our working

methods, such as, finalizing a repository of best practices for the General Assembly and its subsidiary bodies, and periodically updating the Rules of Procedure to include recent decisions taken by this Assembly.”

The working group would begin to consider these and other issues shortly.

Finally, the President said that he would convene debates on counter-terrorism in December, on climate change in February 2008, and on management reform in April.

Following the remarks of the President, several Member States delivered statements on the issue. Below is a brief summary of some of the main issues discussed.

On taking the floor, the representative from [Portugal](#), speaking on behalf of the European Union, noted that true revitalization can only happen if the General Assembly decides to tackle important issues.

[Algeria](#), speaking on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, said that the NAM was deeply disappointed with the current “Security Council encroachment on General Assembly issues, such as climate change,” adding that it was a cause of great concern that the Secretary-General’s report on implementation of resolutions on GA revitalization had not yet been made available. On working methods, the delegate said improvements to the General Assembly’s working methods were only a first step towards restoring and enhancing its authority, including in the maintenance of peace and security as outlined in Charter articles 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 35. Algeria would oppose any reform proposal that sought to contradict that objective. Moreover, he said genuine revitalization would have to address the main issue behind the non-implementation of GA resolutions and a lack of resources to that end. Satisfied by discussions on the mandate review, he hoped the issue of providing resources would be addressed in a similar manner.

The representative of the [United States](#) said that the General Assembly’s “inability to reach closure on issues undermines its relevance. An unwieldy and static agenda leads to repetitive debates. Unfortunately, in our view, these shortcomings are now threatening to undermine the very process of General Assembly reform; indeed, the agenda item under consideration is at risk of falling victim to the very same deficiencies it seeks to rectify,” although he added that previous debates on GA reform had produced valuable and insightful, if modest, recommendations on the way forward. Furthermore, he said that the working group provided a new opportunity for States to take ownership of the Assembly’s credibility, and ability to respond to real world issues, one of which would be the upcoming meeting on Israel-Palestine in Annapolis.

[India](#) said that focus on substantive measures would be central in any revitalization process, as well as guarding against Security Council encroachment on General Assembly affairs, which was a cause for great concern. Finally, the representative asked the Security Council to deliver more analytical reports to the General Assembly on its activities.

Pakistan’s delegate offered additional input, such as according the Assembly a greater review role in peace and security and creating a monitoring mechanism to give the Assembly an advisory role in implementing adopted decisions. Furthermore, he said the President should be authorized to request special briefings on any issue from the Presidents of the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council as well as the Secretary-General, and he supported efforts to strengthen the Assembly President’s Office. He highlighted the clear need to rationalize the Assembly’s program of work and discard outdated debates. Greater cooperation among the principal United Nations organs would enhance the Assembly’s ability to carry out its responsibilities, and reduce “inter-organ power struggles.”

Egypt underscored the need for states to implement General Assembly resolutions, while also calling for reform of the Security Council. On the latter, the delegate noted that the General Assembly should be able to act when the Security Council could not.

**This update is meant to be a summary of some of the main issues discussed during the meetings and does not represent a complete and official account of all positions expressed by Member States.*