



Remarks

by

H.E. Mr. John W. Ashe

President of the 68th Session of the United Nations

General Assembly

First meeting of the

Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization

of the work of the General Assembly

New York

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Ambassador Ružička,
Ambassador Sinhaseni
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to be able to address this first meeting in the 68th session of the Ad Hoc Working on the Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly. At the outset, please allow me to congratulate our two co-Chairs, Ambassador Ružička of Slovakia and Ambassador Sinhaseni of Thailand, for their professionalism, enthusiasm and inclusiveness with which they have been engaging with Member States since their respective appointments.

I also wish to thank Ambassador Khalil of Egypt who has previously served as Chair of this Group during the 67th session. The outcome realized under his able chairmanship will serve as the basis for your work in this session.

Excellencies,

During the General Debate of the 68th Session, Member States of the United Nations devoted considerable attention to the question of UN reform. They expressed that such an endeavour is very much needed in an increasingly complex and challenging global context. Specifically, under the broad umbrella of UN reform, delegations highlighted the unique character and the central position of the General Assembly as the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations.

I am in full agreement with this assessment. On several occasions I have stated that an organisation that does not reform itself is at risk of becoming irrelevant and this also holds true for our General Assembly. As its President, the question of its revitalization is one that I very much take to heart. Throughout this session, as you consider ways in

which this body can improve its working methods and carry out its mandates more effectively, your deliberations are not, and cannot be, a matter of routine.

In this session, you will seek to build on, and to take forward, the achievements of previous sessions. Resolution 67/297, adopted on August 29, 2013, sets out clearly the parameters of your work in four areas: the role and authority of the General Assembly; its working methods; the selection and appointment of the Secretary General and other executive heads; and strengthening the institutional memory of the Office of the President of the General Assembly.

Where institutional memory is concerned, while the details of challenges facing various Presidents of the Assembly may vary from one Session to the next, each individual experience of guiding the work of the Assembly has its own intrinsic worth. The lessons of those experiences can be of usefulness to succeeding Presidents, all the more since the holders of this high office are invariably persons who themselves have served their respective countries with great distinction both nationally and in the international community. It should not be beyond the creativity of Member States to identify appropriate ways of capturing and making use, in a structured manner, of the collective wisdom garnered from the experience of those who have served previously as Presidents of the General Assembly, including through the granting of General Assembly Observer Status for the existing Council of Presidents of the General Assembly.

Previous work has already yielded some benefits and it is fair to say that the General Assembly's work is becoming more dynamic and connected to global developments as a result. However, I encourage you to stay committed to making further tangible progress, particularly in areas that require immediate attention. In this regard, I wish to invite you to give consideration to following pertinent issues, namely: the presentation by the Secretary General of the organization's biennial budget at the first meeting of the Fifth Committee in the session when the budget is to be presented, rather than some weeks later as is currently the practice; the election of non-permanent members of the Security Council and members of the ECOSOC earlier in the year, say in June, as opposed to

October of each year, as is currently the practice, in order to foster better advance planning and preparation before members assume their responsibilities.

Distinguished Delegates,

In my acceptance speech on 14 June 2013 and in my opening statement at the General Debate on 24 September 2013, I expressed my conviction that effective multilateralism requires frank and unvarnished scrutiny of the work of our Assembly, and that our efforts at reforming and revitalizing it need new impetus. To this end, I committed to strengthening the internal operations of this body, as well as its relationship with other organs of the system.

Since the beginning of the session, I have made every effort to live up to these precepts. When we faced deadlocks, I have tried my utmost to provide decisive leadership to advance processes, such as for the elections of the Chairs of the Main Committees. Keeping in mind the careful management of our resources, I have insisted on the necessity to commence and conclude meetings on time. I have focused attention on strengthening cooperation and coordination between the Assembly and the Security Council, the ECOSOC, the subsidiary bodies, as well as the Secretary General, all of whom I have met with regularly since assuming the Presidency of this Assembly. At the beginning of this year, I also convened an informal meeting of the General Committee to brief its members on what was achieved during the main part of the session, as well as on the program of work for the remainder of the session. This briefing can be found on my website.

While I have endeavoured to serve you as best as possible, I trust that at the end of this session, you will be the best judges of my initiatives. At the same time, the President of the Assembly is also dependent on all of you, as Member States representatives, to ensure that this body asserts the authority conferred upon it by the UN Charter, including through the implementation of the resolutions adopted by the Assembly, and in particular those adopted on the revitalization of its work.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This General Assembly is tasked with the role of finalizing one shared, sustainable development agenda. I have stressed that development, in particular sustainable development, is the Assembly's reason for being. In the context, of "setting the stage" for the post-2015 development agenda, I have begun the series of Thematic Debates and High Level events I pledged to host at the start of the session and I appreciate your continued support. At the same time, other Assembly mandated processes such as the Open Working Group and the High Level Political Forum are proceeding with their work.

As we recommit to strengthening our Assembly, let us remain ever mindful that our work has the potential to improve the lives of present and future generations – mothers, fathers, sons and daughters – in all corners of the world. Our promise to reform and revitalize this Assembly has impacts far beyond these hallways. Through our collective efforts, we can shape a modern and efficient United Nations to open a new chapter in development, tackle the many challenges of our time, and redirect our collective course for the better.

I wish you a thoughtful and productive series of deliberations.

Thank you.
