

STATEMENT BY MR. AJAI MALHOTRA, AMBASSADOR/ACTING PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE, ON AGENDA ITEM 121: REVISALITATION OF THE WORK OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AT THE 62ND SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON NOVEMBER 26, 2007

Mr. President,

We are pleased to participate in the debate on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly and associate ourselves with the position of the Non-aligned Movement as expressed by the delegation of Algeria.

Mr. President,

The General Assembly is the chief deliberative, policy-making, and representative organ of the UN. Its revitalization should restore the Assembly to its position of primacy, as per the Charter. It must ensure that the GA addresses itself to the developmental problems confronting the overwhelming majority of UN Member States. A revitalized General Assembly must also set the global agenda, especially on economic and financial issues.

Over the last few years, Member States have agreed on certain measures to rationalize and streamline the work and agenda of the General Assembly and to improve its working methods and that of its main Committees. These efforts have sought to give a sharper focus to its work. They have also led to addressing the needs of the office of the President of the General Assembly, including during a period of transition. Efforts to trim down the heavy burden of papers submitted to the General Assembly have reduced the volume of such documentation. Such procedural changes mark a useful beginning. However, the General Assembly cannot be revitalized via better coordination or streamlining of procedures alone. Central to revitalization is a focus on substantive measures aimed at restoring and enhancing the role and authority of the General Assembly to the position originally envisaged in the Charter.

Mr. President,

The General Assembly can hardly be revitalized while its role, prerogatives and authority are being undermined by encroachment of its agenda by the Security Council. The balance between the principal organs of the UN, envisaged in the Charter, must be maintained and respected. Of special concern is the encroachment by the Security Council on issues that traditionally fall within the GA's competence, such as the process of standard-setting and codification of international law. Of concern also is the holding of thematic debates in the Security Council on issues that frequently fall within the purview of the General Assembly or the Economic and Social Council. Resolution 60/286 reiterated that in addition to the Security Council making its annual report more analytical, it should submit special reports to the GA. It is also important to fulfill this provision while the Security Council considers ways to further improve the quality of its reports to the General Assembly. At the same time we should guard against an over-zealous attitude that may lead to the GA, in turn, intruding into areas that are primarily the core competence of other UN bodies.

Mr. President,

It is equally important to implement provisions of previous GA resolutions in the matter. It may be recalled that a substantive area that GA resolution 60/286 attempted to revitalize is the role of the GA in the selection of the UN Secretary-General. It sought to put in place a more inclusive and transparent procedure for the appointment of the Secretary-General, consistent with Article 97 of the Charter. Furthermore, GA resolution 59/313 requested the President of the GA to propose interactive debates on current issues on the agenda of the Assembly, in consultation with Member States. A procedure for ascertaining the views of Member States in deciding the themes for such thematic debates, would help identify issues of current interest to members and avoid duplication of discussions elsewhere in the UN.

Mr. President,

In a dynamic and changing world, it is important to focus on the more substantive aspects of GA revitalization on an ongoing basis. In this context, we look forward to the setting up of the Open Ended Working Group, in line with GA resolution 61/292, with a view to enhancing the role, authority, effectiveness and efficiency of the General Assembly through implementation of previous resolutions and consideration of creative new proposals.

In conclusion, we would like to felicitate the distinguished Permanent Representatives of Paraguay and Poland and wish them every success in their important work as co-chairs of the Open Ended Working Group.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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