

74th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly

India Statement

By

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Mr. President,

I thank you for convening this important meeting. India aligns itself with the statement made by Algeria on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

We extend our appreciation to the Permanent Representatives of Jordan and Slovakia, the Co-chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly of the 73rd session for ably steering the work of the Ad Hoc Group and congratulate the Permanent Representatives of Slovakia and Ghana on their appointment as co-chairs for the 74th Session and wish them continued success. My delegation will extend full support to them for a productive outcome.

Mr. President,

As the most representative global body of the United Nations, the General Assembly is the closest institution to a global parliament. Its primacy and legitimacy flows from the universality of its membership and the principle of sovereign equality of all its members. The inclusive character of the General Assembly and the moral weight of its decisions and opinions cannot be compared to any other global organization or institution.

However, there is a widespread feeling that the General Assembly has steadily lost touch with its core responsibilities and is increasingly involved with processes. The role and authority of the General Assembly has also been progressively undermined by the

expansive role and activism of the Security Council. A part of the blame must lie with the General Assembly and its member states for having allowed the General Assembly to be undermined and encroached upon despite being the collective voice of the mankind. This is counterproductive to the overall effectiveness and relevance of the United Nations.

Mr. President,

India has consistently held the view that the General Assembly can be revitalized only when its position as the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative organ of the United Nations is respected in letter and in spirit.

In any discussion of the revitalization of the General Assembly, we must recall that the UN Charter gives the General Assembly a unique leadership role. Article 10 of the UN Charter mandates the General Assembly to discuss any question or matter within the scope of the Charter or relating to the powers and functions of any organs provided for in the Charter, except as provided in Article 12.

The General Assembly must, therefore, take the lead in setting the global agenda and restoring the centrality of the United Nations in formulating multilateral approaches to resolving existing and emerging global challenges.

Mr. President,

For a revitalized General Assembly which is in tune with the challenges of our times, we need to draw inspiration from the high standards the General Assembly set for itself right at the beginning of its journey.

It is worth recalling that the first issue the General Assembly addressed at its first session in January 1946 related to the “problems raised by the discovery of atomic energy”. The first resolution that the General Assembly adopted called for a Commission to make recommendations, inter-alia, “for the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and of all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction.”

In the same year, 1946, the General Assembly, based on an initiative of my own country, India, started addressing the global struggle for “equality of opportunity for all races against the doctrine of racial discrimination” then germinating in South Africa.

Over the years, there have been several such occasions when the General Assembly has led from the front in global agenda setting and addressing the challenges facing the world. The Sustainable Development Summit in 2015 followed by the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Ocean Conference in 2017 and the recent Climate Summit, High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and the high-level meeting on Universal Health Coverage are examples of how the General Assembly can set the global agenda and galvanize the global community for solving the common problems and challenges. It is incumbent upon us, the member states, to remain vigilant in ensuring that the General Assembly remains in the leadership role and maintains its ability to squarely address the global challenges.

Mr. President,

The process of revitalization of the General Assembly is an urgent requirement. Although it is encouraging that we are making progress, we firmly believe that we have a long way to go.

The revitalization of the General Assembly must also be seen in the wider context of the overall reform of the United Nations. It is our firm belief that the urgent and comprehensive UN reform is imperative to make it reflective of current geopolitical realities and enhance its capability to meet increasingly complex and pressing transnational challenges of our time.

The effectiveness, relevance and longevity of any institution lies in its dynamic character, its ability to adapt itself to the changing times so that it does not only uphold the cherished values but also becomes capable of addressing the emerging problems and challenges of the day.

The growing number of challenges faced by the world related to sustainable development, security, migration, health, climate change, frontier technologies etc are incapable of being addressed in isolation or by a group of countries.

As we prepare to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations next year, let us utilize this important milestone to make genuine efforts to strengthen the role of General Assembly in global-agenda setting, policy-making, and finding solutions to global challenges and problems. The success of multilateralism largely depends on the success of the General Assembly.

You can count on my delegation's constructive support and participation in these efforts.

I thank you, Mr. President.