



STATEMENT BY MR. AJAI MALHOTRA, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE,
ON AGENDA ITEM 110: REVITALIZATION OF THE WORK OF THE GENERAL
ASSEMBLY AT THE 61ST SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON
DECEMBER 13, 2006

Madam President,

We thank the Secretary-General for his report A/61/483, which provides a useful background for our consideration today of the issue of revitalization of the UN General Assembly. The position of the Non-aligned Movement on this topic has been expressed by Cuba and it has my delegation's full support.

Madam President,

The report of the Secretary-General details the many steps implemented over the last few years to streamline the work and agenda of the General Assembly. There has been considerable focus on improving the working methods of the General Assembly and its main Committees. Efforts have also been made to rationalize and streamline the agenda of the General Assembly so as to give a sharper focus to its work. Additional staff has been provided to the office of the President of the General Assembly, as also during the period of transition between an outgoing and incoming President. The Secretariat has endeavoured to reduce the heavy burden of documentation submitted to the General Assembly for its consideration. Looking at all this one might even reach the erroneous conclusion that a great deal has been achieved.

A useful beginning has certainly been made through the revitalization exercise undertaken so far, via implementation of many of the provisions of resolutions already adopted on this subject. However, in a dynamic and changing

world, we need to regularly review measures that can improve our work efficiency. At the same time, such measures by themselves do not automatically lead to empowerment of the General Assembly. The streamlining of procedures and working methods is only a means to an end – it is not the end itself. Having come this far in our quest to revitalize the General Assembly, we must now focus on the more substantive aspects of GA revitalization. Such reform must necessarily be an ongoing process that is part of a continuum; it cannot be limited to any current or just-completed process in a particular GA session; it has to be part of a larger, ongoing process of UN reform that will need to be furthered in the months and years ahead.

Madam President,

A revitalized General Assembly cannot be achieved via better coordination alone. It must focus on setting the global agenda, especially on development issues. Revitalization of the GA should ensure that the GA addresses itself to the development problems confronting the overwhelming majority of UN member states. The General Assembly must also restore the centrality of the UN in economic matters. Increase in the weight and voice of developing countries in the global economic architecture would exercise a positive influence on the Bretton Woods Institutions and enhance the acceptability of their decisions.

Madam President,

One substantive area that resolution 60/286 attempted to revitalize is the role of the GA in the selection of the UN Secretary-General. Efforts to put in place a more inclusive and transparent procedure for the appointment of the Secretary-General, consistent with Article 97 of the Charter, need not only be undertaken when a selection process is on the horizon or underway. There is a need to address this important issue on a continuing basis.

Another topic that has figured in resolutions on GA revitalization, and on which a number of countries have expressed concern during previous discussions, is that of balance between the principal organs of the UN. 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, conduct of thematic debates) are of particular concern. The consequent undermining of the role and authority of the General Assembly needs to be redressed, if it is to be revitalized. The resort to thematic debates in the Security Council on issues that very often fall within the purview of the General Assembly or the Economic and Social Council, remains an area of concern to many delegations. The balance between the principal organs of the United Nations as ordained by the Charter must be respected and maintained. The encroachment by the Security Council on issues that clearly fall within the

functions and powers of the Assembly and its subsidiary bodies is also contrary to our collective decision to strengthen and revitalize the General Assembly.

Resolution 60/286 reiterated that in addition to the Security Council making its annual report more analytical, it should also submit special reports to the GA. The most recent annual report of the Security Council remained deficient in terms of analytical content, while no special report has been submitted. In any case, the Security Council must continue to consider ways to further improve the quality of its reports to the General Assembly.

Operative Para 3(a) of resolution 59/313 requests the President of the GA to propose interactive debates on current issues on the agenda of the Assembly, in consultation with Member States. We appreciate the initiative taken by the President of the GA in recently organizing such an interactive debate. Views of the Member States in deciding the themes for such periodic thematic discussions are important in order to ensure that the issues taken up are indeed of current global relevance. It would also be useful to avoid duplication of discussions held recently in other UN fora, e.g., in the ECOSOC or in its functional Commissions. Prior consultation on themes for interactive debates can be expected to lead to wider, more effective and enthusiastic participation in them.

While attempting to revitalize the work of the General Assembly, there is also a need to bear in mind the core competence of the GA itself. The General Assembly occupies the central position as the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative organ of the United Nations. However, it is not expected to function as an executive or judicial arm. As its presiding officer the President must be able to enhance its performance in the interests of the broad membership of the General Assembly. In this era of cross-cutting concerns we must also guard against an over-zealous approach leading to the GA intruding into areas that are essentially the core competence of other bodies in the UN system even as we avoid a surrender of its remit to others.

Madam President,

Resolution 60/286 adopted by the GA on this subject at its last Session, invited the President of the 61st GA to convene consultations among Member States to decide on the establishment of an Ad hoc Working Group on this issue that would be open to all UN Member States. We would urge you, Madam President, that such consultations be undertaken without delay so as to enable continued consideration by Member States of the important issue of revitalization of the General Assembly with a view to identifying ways to enhance its role, authority, effectiveness and efficiency.

Thank you, Madam President.

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