Statement by Ambassador Manjeev Singh Puri, Deputy Permanent Representative at the Meeting of the Adhoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the General Assembly on April 28, 2011

Distinguished Co-Chairs,

Let me start by placing on record my delegation's happiness at the decision taken by the two Co-Chairs (Ambassador Camillo M. Gonsalves of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Ambassador Dalius Čekuolis of Lithuania) to convene this meeting to discuss the provisions concerning "working methods" in Resolution 64/301 on revitalization of the UN General Assembly.

The briefings by the Chair of the Second Committee, the Chair of the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Procedural Questions of the Security Council and the Secretariat are pertinent. We thank the Co-Chairs for their initiative in this regard.

Distinguished Co-Chairs,

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 both in letter and in spirit.

The General Assembly should take the lead in setting the global agenda and restoring the centrality of the United Nations in formulating multilateral approaches to resolving transnational issues. This was the role intended for the Assembly in Article 10 of the UN Charter, namely that it discuss any questions or matters within the scope of the present Charter or relating to the powers and functions of any organs provided for in the Charter, i.e. the Security Council, the ECOSOC, Trusteeship Council, ICJ as well as the Secretariat.

Before I proceed to outline my delegation's views on the subjects under consideration in this meeting, let me state that we align ourselves with the statement that will be made by Algeria on behalf of the NAM.

Distinguished Co-Chairs,

In our view, the primacy of the Assembly flows from the universality of its membership as well as the diligent application of the principle of sovereign equality of all its members. Ownership therefore, of the Assembly's decisions and activities, is reflected in the degree of participation by member-states. So, if there is a foreboding sense of apathy towards the work done in the Assembly, the member-states are also partly to blame.

If the member-states, instead of engaging in substantive deliberations in the six main committees that could result in setting new norms, spend considerable resources on procedural issues they will only encourage the usurpation of their role by other institutions both within and outside the UN. A case in point is the agenda of the Assembly which contains a large number of items which have little or no bearing whatsoever with the most pressing contemporary concerns of relevance to all Member States as well as the international community as a whole. Similarly, there is an embarrassing reluctance to hold thematic debates on issues of relevance to the international community and of concern and interest to the Organization. In our view this is a matter of particular concern since outsourcing of such discussions, especially beyond the UN, militates against the notion of the Assembly's centrality to multilateralism.

Distinguished Co-Chairs,

India is no stranger to the application of newer and modern technologies to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of electoral processes. In our considered view, the revitalization process of the General Assembly will benefit immensely if we are able to introduce those technologies that are efficient, and that ensure the security and confidentiality of the voting process.

In regard to the issue of the visibility and enhanced public awareness of the work of the General Assembly, our position is two-fold.

First, we, the member-states need to make the Assembly and its work more relevant to the evolving international system, in other words, the presence of political will to take concrete measures to reinforce the role and authority of the Assembly. We need to

properly appreciate and then correctly situate the Assembly within the plurality of multilateral mechanisms that deal with global issues.

Second, there are a number of best practices available in this regard in various international organizations, albeit on a smaller scale. Such best practices could be used as a guide to promote visibility and enhanced public awareness of the work of the General Assembly. To provide but one instance, we need to end the continuing anachronism of press briefings which remain off limits for delegates from various Permanent Missions accredited to the United Nations. In other words, this means, that while I can make a statement on the working of the UN General Assembly and other principal organs here at the UN headquarters, I cannot sit in as a silent observer in a press conference at the Dag Hammarskjold Library Auditorium!

Distinguished Co-Chairs,

Before I conclude I would like to share my thoughts on the tasks being undertaken by the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Procedural Questions of the Security Council. I do not wish to repeat our position and demands in that respect. Rather, I wish to draw attention to the fact that despite years of efforts real progress in respect of improvements in the Security Council's working methods has been minimal. Some permanent members continue to argue that reform of working methods cannot be discussed by non-Members. Even many decisions already taken by Council in Note S/2006/507 remain unimplemented. And there appears to be little appetite for the far-reaching reforms that the large majority is demanding.

This only strengthens our view that the many flaws in the Council's working methods are only symptoms of a deeper malaise that lies in its structure and composition.

Clearly, genuine and lasting improvement of the working methods of the Council can only be possible as part of a comprehensive process of Security Council reform, based on both reform and expansion of its composition in permanent and non-permanent categories. Till there is a change in the real power structure of the Council i.e. its permanent membership, we cannot realistically expect the deep-seated changes that the large majority seeks.

Distinguished Co-Chairs,

Finally, let me also reiterate that my delegation attaches importance to the on-going processes of revitalization of the General Assembly, including the various aspects of strengthening of its procedures, working methods, documentation and also ensuring

due follow up. I would also like to reiterate India's constructive support and participation in this present exercise.

Thank you.

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