

**Thematic Meeting of the *ad hoc* Working Group on the
revitalization of the General Assembly
The role of the General Assembly in the election of the
new Secretary-General**

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**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR RONALDO SARDENBERG,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF BRAZIL TO THE UNITED
NATIONS**

(Check against delivery)

Mr. Co-Chair,

The latest thematic debate in this *ad hoc* Working Group, held 6 April on the substance of debates and resolutions, was highly useful in helping to identify the main issues ahead. My delegation is confident that under the leadership of the co-Chairs, Ambassador Abdullah Alsaidi (Yemen) and Ambassador Solveiga Silkalna (Latvia), we will continue to have a fruitful debate.

Today our discussion relates to one of the most important decisions the United Nations will have to make this year. The process of recommendation and appointment of the next Secretary General provides an opportunity for Member States to test the UN effectiveness and efficiency as it discharges its responsibilities. This becomes all the more important within the overall context of UN reform. After the recent establishment of the Peace Building Commission and of the Human Rights Council, to begin open deliberations on the appointment of the next Secretary-General presents a new challenge in our efforts to adjust the UN decision-making-process to a time of greater transparency and greater collective engagement with the work of our Organization.

I wish to raise a few concrete points I believe can be further considered in the course of our deliberations:

- First, in 1997 the United Nations held an in-depth discussion on this issue in the Open-Ended High-Level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations

System. The final report of that WG included the wise recommendation that the General Assembly should make full use of its power of appointment, as enshrined in the UN Charter. Despite the fact that years have elapsed since then, and that the recommendations of the 1997 Working Group are a product of their time, their principles remain useful and should be revisited in order to provide a good basis for further deliberations on the issue.

- A structured, innovative approach is essential. Effective and full consideration has to be given to the formulation contained in Article 97 of the UN Charter, according to which the General Assembly appoints the Secretary General upon recommendation of the Security Council. Our delegation recognizes, however, that all care should be exercised not add further instability to an already not entirely stable and transparent process.
- The report of the 1997 WG also addressed the issue of the timing of the appointment. A particularly useful recommendation contained therein states that “in order to ensure a smooth and efficient transition, the Secretary-General should be appointed as early as possible, preferably no later than one month before the date on which the term of the incumbent expires”.
- Lack of transparency is also a key issue that must be addressed in the interest of the credibility of the UN. In this regard, the UN could learn and benefit from the recent introduction of more transparent procedures for the selection of executive heads of its funds and programmes, as those adopted last year for the appointment of the heads of the UNDP and UNHCR.
- Finally, candidates should be given an opportunity to address the General Assembly and present his or her ideas on the main issues on the UN agenda. A timely dialogue would highlight the need for the participation of the whole membership in the decision-making process of such a crucial issue. In addition, advanced and broad-based consultations with the different regional groups would stimulate a concrete dialogue on issues of immediate relevance to the Member States.

This is the right time to consider proposals pertaining to that process. Transparency, full participation of the UN membership, and orderly process, within the framework of our Charter, are now key requirements. Our discussions should seize the momentum instilled by the process of UN reform. The updating of the process of appointment of the next Secretary General is intrinsically linked to the revitalization of the General Assembly and to the explicit determination of Member States to make the UN stronger, and more prepared to meet the political challenges of the twenty-first century.

Thank you