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United Nations

**Report of the Ad Hoc
Working Group on the
revitalization of the General
Assembly established by General
Assembly resolution 59/313 of
12 September 2005**

General Assembly

Official Records

Sixtieth Session

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Introduction

1. In paragraphs 4 and 5 of its resolution 59/313 of 12 September 2005, the General Assembly:

“decide[d] to establish an ad hoc working group open to all Member States to identify ways to further enhance the role, authority, effectiveness, and efficiency of the General Assembly, inter alia, by building on relevant Assembly resolutions and reviewing the agenda and working methods of the Assembly” [and]

“decide[d] also that the ad hoc working group shall submit a report with specific recommendations to the General Assembly at its sixtieth session”.
2. This report and the recommendations contained therein are submitted pursuant to that request.
3. In his letter of 29 November 2005, the President of the General Assembly appointed the Ambassadors of Latvia and Yemen to serve as Co-Chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group and to guide this process.
4. In their letter dated 16 January 2005, in which they invited “all delegations to assist us in identifying ways to further enhance the role, authority, effectiveness, and efficiency of the General Assembly”, the Co-Chairs identified three key elements to be dealt with by the Working Group in pursuing its mandate:
 - I) “to review the agenda of the General Assembly, in order to avoid redundancy;
 - II) “to examine the role of the Assembly in light of current political realities, in order to enhance its credibility, authority and visibility;
 - III) “to propose reforms to the working methods of the Assembly, in order to make it more effective and efficient.”
5. The Co-Chairs also stated their intention to assess the impact of previous relevant assembly resolutions and, as far as possible, to promote further implementation of the recommendations contained therein.

Proceedings

6. The Working Group held seven meetings: on 16 February, 3, 16 and 29 March, and 6, 19 and 26 April 2006.
7. At its first, second, and third meetings, on 16 February, 3, 16 and 29 March, the Working Group held a general debate to identify ways to further enhance the role, authority, effectiveness and efficiency of the General Assembly, inter alia, by building on relevant Assembly resolutions and reviewing the agenda and working methods of the Assembly.
8. At the first meeting, on 16 February, several delegations requested information from the Secretariat on the state of implementation of previous resolutions on revitalization of the General Assembly. In response to this request, and in order to facilitate the work of the Ad hoc Working Group, an informal background note was prepared by the Secretariat and circulated to all Member States before the second meeting on 3 March 2006.
9. At its second meeting, on 3 March, the Director of the General Assembly and ECOSOC Affairs Division presented the informal note to the Ad hoc Working Group and answered questions by Member States. Further, members of the Working Group requested from the Secretariat an informal note on the work of the Main Committees on revitalization, which duly was submitted by the Secretariat in advance of the following meeting on 16 March.
10. At its meeting on 29 March 2006, the Ad Hoc Working Group decided to reverse the order of the last two thematic meetings. Accordingly, after the first two thematic meetings, which focused on the role and authority of the General Assembly, the topic of the third thematic meeting, held on 19 April 2006, was devoted to the role of the General Assembly in the process of selecting the Secretary-General. The topic of the fourth and final thematic meeting, held on 26 April, was devoted to the working methods and agenda of the General Assembly.
11. The President of the General Assembly, who attended the fourth meeting of the Ad hoc working group, delivered an address on the role and the authority of the General Assembly in ongoing United Nations reforms, focusing as well on its impact on the revitalization process and on its role in the selection of the Secretary-General.
12. At its fourth through seventh meetings, on 29 March 2006, 6, 19 and 26 April 2006, the Working Group held thematic debates on the following clusters, as proposed by the Co-Chairs: role and authority of the General Assembly (29

March and 6 April); role of the General Assembly in selecting the Secretary-General (19 April); and working methods and agenda of the General Assembly (26 April).

D) Role and Authority of the General Assembly

13. The Working Group identified issues surrounding the role and authority of the General Assembly as central to efforts to revitalize it. Deep concern was expressed regarding the relationship and balance of roles between the Security Council and the General Assembly.
14. The Working Group felt strongly that the relationships between the General Assembly and other principal organs of the United Nations should continue to be strengthened. As a general principle, delegations insisted, any approach to addressing the relationship between the principal organs should be one based upon cooperation and the need for balance.
15. The point was also frequently underscored that the role of the General Assembly on matters of peace and security should be reaffirmed, for while it was acknowledged that the Security Council has primary responsibility in this area, it was also clearly recalled that that mandate is not exclusive. In this connection, the General Assembly should enhance its examination and discussion of issues of international peace and security in accordance with Articles 10, 11, 12 and 13 of the Charter.
16. Delegations also raised specific points regarding two reports from the Security Council to the General Assembly, namely the annual report of the Security Council and its special subject-oriented reports. Speakers reiterated their request that the former should be more analytical and presented in a timely manner before the commencement of the General Debate. As regards the latter, it was noted that no special subject-oriented reports had yet been submitted or presented by the Council.
17. The need for enhanced complementarity between ECOSOC and the General Assembly was also flagged by a number of speakers, some of whom suggested that this might be achieved in part through a review of ECOSOC's work distribution. Further, delegations expressed the desire that the report of ECOSOC to the Assembly be more analytical and streamlined. They also felt that further effort should be made to avoid overlap between ECOSOC and the Second and Third Committees.
18. On one aspect of strengthening of the Office of the President of the General Assembly, a number of delegations encouraged the submission by each outgoing President of a short report on lessons learnt, emphasising the importance of continuity in the transfer from President to President and of acquiring and cementing institutional memory.

19. On the issue of the content and impact of General Assembly resolutions, a number of speakers continued to underscore the need to make resolutions more concise and action-oriented, including by shortening the number of preambular paragraphs. A majority of these speakers also underscored that new resolutions should clearly add value to existing ones.
20. On implementation of resolutions, some speakers also raised a possible role for the Secretariat in providing information on the implementation and status of resolutions dealing with the issue. Many agreed that focus and stress should remain on the implementation of the Assembly's resolutions, as this in itself is one of the keys to its revitalization. In this connection, they suggested that obstacles impeding the implementation of resolutions may be identified and possible mechanisms to monitor the implementation of resolutions and mandates should be developed.
21. While a number of delegations upheld the important role that non-governmental organisations and civil society play in enhancing the Assembly's work and outreach, most of them nevertheless underscored that consultation between the General Assembly and other actors should be carried out in accordance with the General Assembly's Rules of Procedure and that the Assembly's intergovernmental nature should be preserved.
22. Some delegations encouraged further raising the visibility of the General Assembly, a few of them specifically supporting the efforts of the Department of Public Information in this endeavour, and some others particularly noting the need to encourage the participation of and coverage by the mass media of developing countries in the Assembly's work.

II) Role of the General Assembly in the election of the Secretary-General

23. A number of delegations underscored the 'partnership' between the Security Council and the General Assembly in the selection of the Secretary-General, in accordance with Article 97 of the Charter.
24. Some of these speakers commented that, even in discussing the issue of the selection of the Secretary-General, the Assembly was in effect revitalizing itself.
25. A number of speakers highlighted the relevance of Assembly resolutions 11(1) of 1946 and 51/241 in elaborating the procedures for the selection of the Secretary-General, some calling for an amendment to 11(1) that would mandate the Security Council to recommend more than one candidate to the General Assembly.
26. Many delegations addressing this issue expressed the view that the process of selecting the Secretary-General needed to be more transparent and that the relevant provisions in the annex of resolution 51/241 should be taken as the

authority and starting point regarding the involvement of the Assembly in the selection process.

27. On the issue of the criteria for and qualities of candidates for the post of Secretary-General, the merits of having standards in place as a guide to selection were appreciated, but many speakers on this point were of the view that such criteria should be limited and general in nature. Additionally, many underlined the importance of Member States being fully aware of the qualifications of candidates, as well as the pressing need for appropriate mechanisms to be devised that would serve this purpose.
28. With regard to the issue of regional rotation, many delegations indicated that resolution 51/241 (and particularly its paragraph 59) should be reaffirmed. A number of speakers also suggested that the mandate of future Secretaries General should be limited to a single term, arguing that this would remove any basis for suggestion that the Secretary-General's conduct could or might be influenced by expectation of re-appointment.
29. Some of those addressing this issue also supported the possibility of a deadline being established by which candidacies for post of Secretary-General should be submitted, believing that this would allow for the building of broad support for a candidate to begin to occur earlier. To ensure a smooth transition between the incoming and outgoing Secretaries-General, however, they felt that the existing provisions of paragraph 61 of the annex of resolution 51/241 are sufficient.

III) Working methods of the General Assembly

30. Many in the Working Group continued to call for a shorter General Assembly agenda. In this regard, the role that political considerations played in implementation and in the choice of items and preparation of resolutions was underscored. All agreed, nonetheless, that the right of Member States to decide on tabling resolutions must continue to be preserved.
31. A few delegations recalled the request that the consolidated version of the General Assembly's Rules of Procedure be made available in all official languages in print and online. Some of these also suggested the role that the Office of Legal Affairs might play in the documentation of procedures and precedents that would lead to the consolidation of best practices, hoping that this possibility might be investigated further.
32. While delegations focusing on the work and revitalization of the Main Committees acknowledged that these Committees themselves should decide on their own agendas, many nonetheless felt that agenda rationalization overall required a strengthened role for the General Committee, which must oversee the distribution of work, and that this role should also be encouraged.

33. A number of speakers on this issue noted that the General Committee had not made any recommendations on it since the adoption of resolution 58/316. They strongly encouraged it to make proposals on a more regular basis regarding the biennialization, triennialization, clustering, and elimination of agenda items, though they acknowledged that the General Committee should avoid delving into substantive matters. A number of those concerned with this issue also encouraged joint informal debates between the Second and Third Committees.
34. On election procedures, a number of delegations recalled the issue of utilization of optical scanners to expedite counting in elections, as recommended in paragraph 15 of resolution 59/313, urging its continued pursuit.
35. With regard to documentation, some delegations reprised their call for reports to be more concise and analytical.

Conclusion

36. At the conclusion of the 26 April meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group, the Co-Chairs thanked delegations for their interest and suggestions. They indicated their intention to compile the information, requests, and recommendations that had been provided to them by Member States, as well as their plan to revert to delegations with their consolidation of these, which would be in the form of recommendations for elements for a draft resolution by the Assembly. These recommendations are attached in the annex that follows.

Annex

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ELEMENTS
FOR A DRAFT RESOLUTION
ON GENERAL ASSEMBLY REVITALIZATION
25 MAY 2006

1. *Reaffirming* the central position of the General Assembly as the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations, as well as the role of the Assembly in the process of standard-setting and the codification of international law,
2. *Recalling* its previous resolutions relating to the revitalization of its work, particularly resolutions 59/313, 58/316, and 58/126,

Cluster 1 – Role and Authority of General Assembly

3. *Reaffirms* the role of the General Assembly, including on questions related to international peace and security, as stipulated in Articles 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 of the Charter of the United Nations,
4. *Urges* the Presidents of the General Assembly, the Security Council and ECOSOC to continue to meet periodically to ensure increased cooperation, coordination and complementarity of the three principal organs, and for that purpose, also to consider meeting jointly with the Secretary-General.
5. *Encourages* the use of thematic interactive debates on current issues in the General Assembly and *invites* the President of the General Assembly to propose themes for such interactive debates, in consultation with Member States.
6. *Underlines* the need for the Presidents of the General Assembly, the Security Council and ECOSOC to coordinate the thematic interactive debates in the three organs, so as to ensure complementarity and to avoid duplication.
7. *Invites* the Security Council to further its initiatives to improve the quality of its annual report to the General Assembly, mandated by Article 24, paragraph 3, of the Charter, in order to provide the Assembly with a substantive, analytical and material account of its work, in accordance with resolutions 58/126 and 51/193,

8. *Invites* also ECOSOC to continue to prepare its report to the General Assembly in accordance with General Assembly resolution 50/227, striving to make it more concise and action-oriented, by highlighting the critical areas requiring action by the General Assembly and, as appropriate, by making specific recommendations,

9. *Decides*, in order to strengthen the role and office of the President of the General Assembly, to request the addition of four professional posts to the Office of the President of the General Assembly and to ask that appropriate conference facilities be reserved for that Office's use,

10. *Requests* the President of the General Assembly, at the end of his/her tenure, to prepare and present a report on best practices and lessons learnt for his/her successor,

11. *Requests* the Secretariat to provide an annual chart on the status of implementation on General Assembly resolutions,

12. *Encourages* the Economic and Social Council to assist the General Assembly in the review of the status of implementation of decisions reached at major United Nations summits and conferences by reviewing and reporting on those within its purview,

13. *Decides* that General Assembly resolutions should be more concise, focused and action-oriented, and that preambular paragraphs in its resolutions should normally be kept to the minimum,

14. *Encourages* enhanced interaction with the private sector and civil society, including non-governmental organizations, and particularly those from developing countries, keeping in mind the intergovernmental nature of the United Nations and in conformity with the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly,

15. *Welcomes* the continued cooperation between the General Assembly and national and regional parliaments, particularly through the Interparliamentary Union,

16. *Appreciates* the work of the Department of Public Information in promoting the work of the General Assembly on issues of importance to the international community and *encourages* the Department, in cooperation with countries concerned and with the relevant organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, to continue to take appropriate measures to enhance world public awareness of these and other important global issues,

17. *Urges* the Secretariat to continue its endeavours to raise the visibility of the General Assembly and, toward this end, requests the rearrangement of items in the Journal of the United Nations so that listings of Plenary and other major events of the General Assembly may appear alongside those of the meetings of the Security Council,

Cluster II- Selection of the Secretary-General

18. *Recalls* Article 97 of the Charter, which states that the Secretary-General shall be appointed by the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Security Council,
19. *Recalls* also GA resolutions 11 (I) of 1946 and 51/241,
20. *Reaffirms* specifically paragraph 56 of resolution 51/241 on the need for the process of selection of the Secretary-General to be made more transparent,
21. *Reiterates* paragraph 59 of resolution 51/241, which states that, in the course of the identification and appointment of the best candidate for the post of Secretary-General, due regard shall continue to be given to regional rotation and shall also be given to gender equality,
22. *Encourages* candidates for the position of Secretary-General to present their candidacy at least six months prior to the assumption of the post, to allow for informal meetings with regional and other groups,
23. *Emphasizes* the importance of candidates for the post of Secretary-General possessing and displaying, *inter alia*, commitment to the principles of the United Nations Charter and extensive leadership and diplomatic experience,

Cluster III- Working methods

24. *Encourages*, as and where appropriate, further efforts to shorten the agenda of the General Assembly, *inter alia* through further biennialization, triennialization, clustering and elimination of items,
25. *Requests* the Secretary-General to issue the rules of procedure of the General Assembly in a consolidated version in all official languages, in print and online.
26. *Requests* the Main Committees to consider further clustering and merging agenda items or to reconsider the amount of time allotted to particular agenda items on an annual basis,
27. *Requests* the Second and Third Committees to continue to consider holding joint informal debates on relevant interconnected agenda items,
28. *Suggests* shortening the spring session of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, thereby permitting additional short sessions of the Special Committee which could be dedicated to in-depth discussions of substantive peacekeeping issues, and to reflection on the relationship between the Special Committee and the Secretariat and the Fifth Committee,

29. *Reiterates* its call for the effective implementation of rule 42 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, whereby the General Committee shall meet regularly throughout the session with the bureaux of the Main Committees to review the progress of the work of the Main Committees and to make recommendations for achieving furthering such progress and for minimizing duplication,

30. *Requests* an update on its recommendation, in paragraph 15 of its resolution 59/313, regarding consideration of the use of optical scanners as a means of expediting the counting of votes cast through secret ballots during elections, taking due account of the security requirements in this regard and the credibility, reliability and confidentiality of such means, and requests the Secretary-General to report on the modalities thereof to the General Assembly,

31. *Encourages* submission by the Secretariat of more concise and analytical reports and *welcomes* consideration of the possibility of submission of biannual core policy reports in areas of priority to the United Nations, containing references to documentation already provided by United Nations agencies or programmes, strict page limits for documentation to be submitted by Member States, and standard formats for documentation,

32. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report on all aspects of the implementation of the present resolution to the General Assembly at its sixty-first session.