General Assembly Elects Only Fourth Woman as President of Seventy-Third Session, Also Choosing 21 Vice-Presidents by Acclamation

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**Maria Fernanda Espinosa Garcés of Ecuador Becomes First Woman from Latin America and Caribbean to Lead 193-Member Organ**

The General Assembly elected María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés (Ecuador) today as President of its seventy-third session — making her only the fourth woman to helm the 193-member organ in its more than seven-decades-long history — while also electing 21 Vice-Presidents by acclamation.

Ms. Espinosa, a former Minister for National Defence, received 128 votes, surpassing the required simple majority of 96.  The only other candidate, Mary Elizabeth Flores Flake (Honduras), received 62 votes.

In accordance with tradition, the Assembly President’s election follows the system of geographical rotation whereby regional groups — the Latin American and Caribbean States in the present case — put forward one or more candidates every year.

Ms. Espinosa, taking the podium after the election, said that with today’s vote — an act that strengthened multilateralism — “all States win”, noting that for the first time in history, the President’s election had followed an interactive dialogue with the candidates.  “Today, I become the fourth woman to be elected to this position in 73 years of existence of the United Nations,” she said, adding that she was also the first woman from the Latin America and Caribbean region to preside over the Assembly.

Dedicating her election to all the women in the world who participated in politics — sometimes facing political and media attacks marked by machismo and discrimination — she paid tribute to women struggling every day to access jobs on equal terms, to those who were victims of violence, and to girls and adolescents demanding access to quality information and education.  “I offered an open-door Presidency and I will hold onto that promise,” she said, reiterating her commitment to act as an impartial, objective and open facilitator of the Assembly’s work.  “No view is useful if we do not see, and words have no value if we do not listen,” she said.

Thanking and congratulating outgoing Assembly President Miroslav Lajčák (Slovakia) on his hard work and vision, she emphasized that “the United Nations must run like clockwork”, moving the Organization closer to the objectives enshrined in its Charter.  She pledged support for the Secretary-General’s reform proposals, welcoming his entrepreneurship and courage.  “We have the challenge of building a stronger and more efficient Organization,” she said, adding: “Strengthening multilateralism is not an option, it is an obligation.”

Secretary-General António Guterres, welcoming Ms. Espinosa’s election, noted that it had been more than a decade since a woman had served as President of the General Assembly.  “I believe we can and must do better than a record of four women in 73 years, and two in the past half century,” he said.  Expressing hope that today’s choice would pave the way for accelerated progress towards gender equality, within and beyond the United Nations, he said the world faced urgent and complex challenges, from devastating conflicts to rising inequality and the deepening impacts of climate change.  The Assembly had a vital role to play in debating those issues and in delivering solutions that made a meaningful difference in people’s lives, he stressed.

Also extending their congratulations to Ms. Espinosa on behalf of regional groups were representatives of the following Member States: Mauritius (African States), Palau (Asia-Pacific States), Croatia (Eastern European States), Venezuela (Latin American and Caribbean States) and Liechtenstein (Western European and Other States).

In accordance with tradition, the Secretary-General then drew lots to determine which delegation would occupy the first seat in the General Assembly Hall during the seventy-second session.  Mali was selected for the first seat, to be followed in English alphabetical order by all the other countries, including in the Assembly’s Main Committees.

The Assembly also elected, by acclamation, the following 16 Vice-Presidents of its plenary bureau:  Algeria, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cyprus, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gambia, Guyana, Iraq, Japan, Namibia, Panama, Qatar, San Marino, Spain, Sudan and Ukraine.  Rounding out the 21 Vice-Presidents were the five permanent members of the Security Council — China, France, Russian Federation, United Kingdom and the United States.

In consecutive meetings of its six Main Committees the Assembly then elected members of their respective bureaux, all by acclamation.  The First Committee (Disarmament and International Security) elected Ion Jinga (Romania) as Chair; Marissa Audra Faith Edwards (Guyana) as Vice-Chair; and Muna Zawani Md Idris (Brunei Darussalam) as Rapporteur.  The elections for two remaining Vice-Chairs — from the Group of African States and the Group of Western European and Other States, respectively — were postponed pending the nomination of candidates from those regions.

The Fourth Committee (Special Political and Decolonization) elected Lewis Garseedah Brown II (Liberia) as Chair; Faisal Nasser M. Alhakbani (Saudi Arabia), Dániel Goldea (Hungary) and Michael O’Toole (Ireland) as Vice-Chairs; and Luis Mauricio Arancibia Fernández (Bolivia) as Rapporteur.

The Second Committee (Economic and Financial) elected Jorge Skinner-Kleé Arenales (Guatemala) as Chair; Hessa Muneer Mohammed Rashed AlAteibi (United Arab Emirates) and Cedric Braquetti (Monaco) as Vice-Chairs; and Anneli Lepp (Estonia) as Rapporteur.  Election of a third Vice-Chair, to be nominated by the Group of African States, was postponed to a later date.

The Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) elected Mahmoud Saikal (Afghanistan) as Chair; Martin Kováčik (Slovakia) and Edgar Andrés Molina Linares (Guatemala) as Vice-Chairs; and Katharina Konzett-Stoff (Austria) as Rapporteur.  Election of a third Vice-Chair, to be nominated by the Group of African States, was postponed to a later date.  Election of a third Vice-Chair, to be nominated by the Group of African States, was postponed to a later date.

The Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary) elected Gillian Bird (Australia) as Chair, while also electing Haseeb Gohar (Pakistan), Andre Lipand (Estonia) and Fabio Esteban Pedraza Torres (Colombia) as Vice-Chairs.  The election of Rapporteur — a position to be filled by a candidate nominated by the Group of African States — was postponed to a later date.

The Sixth Committee (Legal) elected Michel Xavier Biang (Gabon) as Chair; Maria Angela Ponce (Philippines), Barbara Kremžar (Slovenia) and Patrick Luna (Brazil) as Vice-Chairs; and Nadia Alexandra Kalb (Austria) as Rapporteur.

The Assembly will reconvene at a date and time to be announced.