



STATEMENT BY

**THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
H.E. MR. JAN ELIASSON**

AT

**THE AD HOC WORKING GROUP ON
REVITALIZATION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
THEMATIC MEETING ON THE ROLE AND
AUTHORITY OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

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Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

It gives me great pleasure to join this ad hoc working group on revitalization of the General Assembly today. You have already had three meetings devoted to a general debate and will now move to consider specific themes. I am grateful to the Co-Chairs – Ambassador Silkalna of Latvia and Ambassador Alsaidi of Yemen – for their leadership, and to all of you for your active participation and your valuable contributions to this work.

As I have stated previously, the world has never needed a strong United Nations and effective multilateralism more than it needs it today. Since the 2005 World Summit in September last year, we have been engaged in a major reform effort to make the United Nations better fit to meet the current global challenges. As the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations, the General Assembly has a central role to play.

It is my firm conviction that progress in the implementation of the 2005 World Summit Outcome through our common efforts will also contribute to the revitalization of the General Assembly – constituting revitalization in action.

In this regard, we have already made several achievements: we have created the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF); we have established the Peacebuilding Commission; we have set up an Ethics Office; and most recently, we have created the Human Rights Council. Our next priorities will be Development and ECOSOC reform, Secretariat and management reform

and the Peacebuilding Commission, where we must quickly complete our unfinished work to constitute the Organizational Committee.

At the same time, of course, I consider General Assembly revitalization a subject in its own right. And it has been, for quite some time. Already on 11 December 1948 – incidentally the day after the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted – the General Assembly decided to include an additional item in the agenda of the third session:

“Creation of an Ad Hoc Committee to consider methods and procedures which would enable the General Assembly to discharge its functions more effectively and expeditiously” (item proposed by Denmark, Norway and Sweden).

You thus have a proud tradition to build on!

While we all agree on the need for revitalization, there are different views on how we can best achieve this goal. Some of you would like to see a more streamlined agenda and rationalization of the Assembly’s working methods; others among you also advocate for more substantive reinforcement related to the role and authority of the Assembly. I believe that these two approaches are complementary and not mutually exclusive.

One case in point is the concept of interactive thematic debates, as called for in GA resolution 59/313. The purpose of the thematic debates would be to “establish broad international understanding on current substantive issues of importance to Member States”. In other words, it is a mechanism by which

the General Assembly would ensure its relevance to the realities of the world and strengthen its role and its “message” on that particular issue. However, in order to ensure interactivity, we also need to think about how we go about organizing our work to make it as effective, timely and action-oriented as possible.

As you know, plans are currently underway for a thematic debate on Human Resources, Health and Development later this spring. I will revert to you regarding the timing and arrangement for this meeting.

Another issue in your deliberations relates to the visibility of the work of the General Assembly in the wider public arena. How do we make the outcomes more known – and more relevant – to the everyday life of the ordinary citizens of the Member States? Here, the Assembly could build on the efforts of previous sessions to strengthen the outreach and dissemination of the Assembly’s work.

Many delegations have also stressed that they would like to see greater participation of non-governmental organizations, civil society and national parliaments in the work of the Assembly. Here the Assembly could build on the recommendations emanating from the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations of 2004, the so called Cardoso-report. I believe that this matter could also be addressed in the context of this working group – and I understand that it will be the subject-matter of a forthcoming thematic meeting.

Many of you have also raised the issue of the role of the Assembly in the selection of the Secretary-General of the Organization. I note that also on this subject-matter the Co-Chairs intend to hold a separate meeting later this spring. I would like to underline that also here the Assembly can already build on earlier work, namely resolution 51/241 of 31 July 1997.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

Today, your meeting will focus on the specific theme of the role and authority of the General Assembly. You will touch upon fundamental issues regarding the powers and functions of the General Assembly. It will involve the relationship between the principal organs, in particular between the General Assembly and the Security Council. I believe that it is very useful for us to reflect on these matters from time to time. Let me make a few remarks, before you start your discussions.

As the President of the General Assembly, I am particularly aware and concerned about the role and authority of the General Assembly. I urge all of you to stand up for this principal organ. We must take confidence and encouragement in what we have achieved and can achieve, and be proud of our work. We should demonstrate through our actions that we can reach agreement on matters of global concern. The adoption of our resolutions on the Peacebuilding Commission and most recently on the Human Rights Council illustrates this point.

As we go about the business of the United Nations, we must respect the function and powers of each principal organ, in accordance with the UN

Charter. However, we should not lose sight of the issue at hand and what it is that we want to achieve. At all times, we should place the problem in the center, and then organize our work around it to find a solution, and not the other way around.

We should make every effort to maintain the balance between the principal organs, as each organ has a very specific role to play. We should always ensure that matters that clearly belong to the purview of one principal organ will be handled by this organ. The relationship between the principal organs should, however, not be reduced to a zero-sum game. In certain cases, a particular matter may have several dimensions, and may actually stand to gain from a many-sided consideration.

I believe that we stand to gain from a better coherence, coordination and complementarity between the General Assembly and the other principal organs. As recommended in GA resolution 58/126, I have held regular bilateral meetings with the President of the Security Council as well as regular trilateral meetings with the Presidents of the Security Council and ECOSOC. The bilateral meetings have been held on a monthly basis, and the latest trilateral meeting at the beginning of this month. I will continue to have such meetings during my Presidency.

I also believe it would be worthwhile to further explore how to involve the General Committee to a greater extent in the revitalization efforts, as recommended in GA resolutions 58/126 and 58/316. The General Committee has met on several occasions during the sixtieth session, both in formal and informal meetings, to advise on how the General Assembly

should organize and manage its work. I have found these meetings very useful.

Let me conclude with a few words regarding the role of the President of the General Assembly, as this is also on the agenda for your discussion today. I know from my own experience during the last six months, that it can be a very demanding job and that it comes with high expectations attached. A strengthened role of the President of General Assembly presupposes a strong Office of the President of the GA and strong support by the Secretariat staff. I am very grateful for the additional resources that were made available to the office through GA resolutions 58/126 and 59/313. However, any additional role foreseen for the President would also require further resources.

I believe that this working group provides a very good opportunity and venue to discuss the whole range of issues concerning the revitalization of the General Assembly, and I am confident that you will continue to have fruitful deliberations under the Co-Chairmanship of Ambassador Silkalna and Ambassador Alsaïdi. I also look forward to the report with recommendations that you will submit to the General Assembly later this spring.

I wish you all success in your important deliberations.