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General Assembly made great strides during an ‘eventful’ 2011, says President



General Assembly President Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser

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From being increasingly vocal on human rights to taking important decisions to tackle non-communicable diseases, the General Assembly has made great strides during its current session, its President said today, adding that efforts will continue on a range of vital issues next year.

“This has been an eventful and demanding year for the United Nations, with several significant developments since I assumed the Presidency of the General Assembly,” Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser [told](#) a year-end press conference at UN Headquarters.

“In fact, the last three months have been among the most exciting of my two-decade experience of diplomatic service here at the United Nations,” he said, adding that the 66th session that began in September has achieved some “great strides” with certain key issues.

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He pointed to the uprisings and popular protest movements that engulfed North Africa and the Middle East this year and led to the toppling of long-term regimes in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia and Yemen, which he referred to as the Arab Awakening.

“These popular protests have generated a lot of concern for the needs and demands of people in the affected countries, especially in the areas of human rights and the rights of women and the youth.

“The General Assembly is increasingly getting vocal on human rights issues,” he added. “There is growing consensus among Member States for the protection and promotion of human rights across the world, especially in the countries experiencing the Arab Awakening.”

Mr. Al-Nasser said that under his presidency, the Assembly remains active in galvanizing the necessary global partnership to assist the governments and people undergoing the Arab Awakening.

The President also highlighted his close collaboration and joint initiatives with [Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon](#), with whom he embarked on two significant joint visits, to Libya in November and Somalia in December.

“We are demonstrating the UN working as one to achieve the best results for the benefit of groups and people in need around the world,” he stated.

Outlining some of the highlights of the Assembly session so far, Mr. Al-Nasser cited the political declaration adopted on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases, which are now the biggest cause of death worldwide.

“Millions of people in developing countries are increasingly becoming victims of this crisis,” he noted. “And this major declaration by Member States should help to deal with this issue fully and quickly.”

The Assembly has also spoken with one voice against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, he said.

“Despite great gains made in the fight against racism too many people still suffer from racist attitudes and deep discrimination. We must do more to promote and ensure equality and non-discrimination across the world and for global prosperity and harmony.”

In addition, Member States worked to restore the legitimate representation of the Libyan people at the UN, and witnessed an historic development at the UN with the application for UN membership by the Palestinian President, Mahmoud Abbas.

Looking ahead, he said efforts will continue on the four main areas of focus for the 66th session of the Assembly: the peaceful settlement of disputes; UN reform; improving disaster prevention and response; and sustainable development and global prosperity. The revitalization of the disarmament machinery is also a priority, he added.

High-level events and thematic debates on these issues are planned, as well as a retreat on Security Council reform, for next year.

“We have about nine more months to go... And we will continue to tackle all the topical important issues on the international agenda,” said Mr. Al-Nasser.

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