

General Assembly ends annual session having ‘accomplished much’ – President



General Assembly President Joseph Deiss (right) and Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon attend the closing of the Assembly’s sixty-fifth session

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The General Assembly concluded its sixty-fifth session today, bringing to a close a year that its outgoing President said saw progress on a number of development-related issues and highlighted the need for the United Nations to do more to respond to the real concerns of people worldwide.

“We have accomplished much,” Joseph Deiss, President of the Assembly’s sixty-fifth session, [said](#) in his closing remarks to the 193-member body, as he outlined some of the highlights of the past year.

The session kicked off last September with a high-level meeting on the Millennium Development Goals ([MDGs](#)), the eight ambitious targets set that aim to slash hunger and poverty, maternal and infant mortality, a host of diseases and lack of access to education and health care, all by 2015.

“We sent a strong message about our determination to keep our promise to halve poverty by 2015 and achieve all the other goals for the millennium,” said Mr. Deiss. “Five years away from the deadline, it was vital to clearly reaffirm our will to redouble our efforts to succeed.”

Development-related topics, including on AIDS and on youth, were highlighted throughout the year, as well as issues such as the green economy and sustainable development. The Assembly also took up the plight of Haiti and the crisis in Côte d’Ivoire, and admitted the newly independent nation of South Sudan as its 193rd member.

While the Assembly has much to be proud of, “we could have done more,” Mr. Deiss said. “The situation in the Middle East remains unstable; in many parts of the world, conflicts are ongoing; far too many human beings on this planet are living in precarious conditions.

“In all these situations, we do not have the right to remain indifferent,” he added.

The President made a number of recommendations which he said would help the UN be “strong and capable of making a difference.” This included determining the common interest, defending basic values, and responding to the real concerns of peoples.

“To be more present in the major issues of our time, the common interest must prevail over national interest,” he stated. “The major challenges before humankind can be solved only insofar as we are able to determine a common interest and a common strategy for achieving it.”

At the beginning of today’s meeting, the Assembly paid tribute to the memory of former Finnish prime minister Harri Holkeri, who passed away last month. Mr. Holkeri served the UN in his capacity as the President of the Assembly’s 55th session and as the Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Kosovo.

[Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon [recalled](#) how Mr. Holkeri showed “great leadership” as outgoing President of the Assembly at the moment when the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001 occurred. “I still remember his great vision, and great commitment, to fight against terrorism...

“He will be a great loss, not only to the UN, but also to the people of Finland,” he added.

The sixty-sixth session of the Assembly opens tomorrow and will be presided over by the incoming President, Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser of Qatar.

Addressing the Group of 77 (G77) developing countries and other Member States in separate meetings today, Mr. Ban stressed the need to make the planet more sustainable for all by taking steps that will ensure that future generations can meet their needs.

“We should make progress in reaching a globally binding climate change agreement as soon as possible,” he said.

He also spoke of the need to build a more peaceful, safer and nuclear-free world, and to create greater opportunities and dignity for all, particularly women and young people.

On UN reform, the Secretary-General highlighted to the need for adequate and predictable resources for the Organization’s work, including through simplifying the budget process.

On staff security, Mr. Ban called for the striking the right balance between security and accessibility. “UN staff cannot do their vital work if confined to a fortress. But neither can they afford to be placed in harm’s way when security upgrades and solutions are available. Member States must recognize the need for more resources in this area,” he said.

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