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Sixty-fourth General Assembly
Plenary
1st Meeting (PM)

GENERAL ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT SAYS DIALOGUE THROUGH UNITED NATIONS, REVITALIZED

ASSEMBLY, 'IS THE WAY TO A BETTER FUTURE', AS SIXTY-FOURTH SESSION OPENS

Says Session Will Focus on Realizing Peace and Security, Dialogue of Civilizations, Responsibility for Development

Opening the General Assembly's sixty-fourth session today, incoming President Ali Abdussalam Treki of Libya underscored that the United Nations and, in particular, the Assembly, "is the way to a better future", and called on people of all colours, religions and origin to engage in dialogue through the Organization and its most representative body.

Because of advances in information and communication technology, what affected some, affected others, he explained, and while dialogue was the only solution, one should not make light of existing problems. "Dialogue and mutual understanding are the way to resolve our problems," he said, stressing that embargoes and blockades were fruitless, as they undermined respect for international will.

Continuing, he said everyone believed the United Nations was in need of reform and democratization, and that the Assembly had been hampered by obstacles that prevented it from enforcing its resolutions. The 192-member body must be reformed to regain its international legitimacy, he declared.

He said reform of the Security Council, the expansion of its membership and the realization of equitable geographic representation were also of utmost importance. Africa was comprised of 53 States, none of which was a permanent member. The same was true of Latin America and countries represented by the Forum of Small States, which accounted for over half of the world's inhabitants. It was vital to reform the Council and revitalize the Assembly so they could comprehensively fulfil their roles.

Turning to other crucial issues, he said the gap between rich and poor had been steadily growing, most often at the expense of the poor and by exploiting resources with which they were endowed. Terrorism had been condemned by all, yet it continued to grow and spread. The international community had to address its roots, whether carried out by individuals, groups or States, which was the harshest form of terrorism.

He said the Middle East situation, unresolved for more than 60 years, was another threat to the global community despite numerous Assembly and Council resolutions. Through the Assembly, the United Nations needed to assume a new, serious role and the many resolutions needed to be respected and implemented. Realizing Palestinians' aspirations towards independence and the right to return to their land were fundamental conditions for achieving peace and security in that part of the world. Ending settlement activities and removing illegal settlements would also help, he added.

“We are faced with many momentous issues whose resolutions require dialogue, cooperation and community spirit,” he asserted. As such, the theme of the sixty-fourth session encompassed joint responsibility for development, the realization of peace and security, and the dialogue of civilizations. In addition, the summit on climate change, convened by the Secretary-General and set to be held next Tuesday, would be a chance for the Assembly to prepare recommendations ahead of the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, Denmark in December.

During the upcoming session, he said the Assembly would address the development goals for the third millennium as it prepared for a high-level meeting in September 2010. He looked forward to the Assembly’s joint consultations within the framework of resolution 63/302.

Regarding the global economic crisis, he noted that the Assembly’s relevant resolution had established a working group to follow up on that issue and promote any recommendations that could be undertaken jointly to alleviate the crisis. He called on all States to consider the issue and search for solutions.

The goal of disarmament and non-proliferation was shared by all, particularly with respect to weapons of mass destruction. He urged the Assembly to work not only towards non-proliferation and elimination of nuclear weapons, but also the elimination of other weapons of mass destruction.

In closing, Mr. Treki said he would work to ensure the Assembly gave sustained, serious and responsible efforts to reach consensus on and resolve issues brought before the body. He also commended United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon for his support, saying that he and the United Nations chief would be working closely together to achieve their goals of development, stability and security.

In other business today, the Assembly also appointed nine members of the Credentials Committee: Brazil; China; Jamaica; Philippines; Russian Federation; Spain; United Republic of Tanzania; United States; and Zambia.

The Assembly authorized (document A/64/348) the following United Nations programmes and bodies would meet during the sixty-fourth session on the strict understanding meetings be accommodated within available facilities and services: Committee on Relations with the Host Country; the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People; Disarmament Commission; Executive Board of the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW); Executive Board of the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF); United Nations Dispute Tribunal; and the Working Group on the Financing of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

Finally, delegations took note of a letter from the Secretary-General to the Assembly President (document A/64/345), informing the Assembly that six Member States were in arrears in payment of their financial contributions to the United Nations, under Article 19 of the United Nations Charter.

[According to Article 19 of the Charter, a Member State in arrears in the payment of its financial contributions to the Organization will have no vote in the Assembly, if the amount of those arrears exceeds the amount of the contributions due from the preceding two years.]

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

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