



General Assembly

Seventy-fourth session

1st plenary meeting
Tuesday, 17 September 2019, 3 p.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Muhammad-Bande..... (Nigeria)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

I am also grateful to the Secretary-General for his leadership and commitment to the United Nations and its ideals.

Item 1 of the provisional agenda

Opening of the session by the President of the General Assembly

The President: It is my great pleasure and honour to declare open the seventy-fourth regular session of the General Assembly.

In preparing to take office, I interacted with all delegations and am grateful for their inputs intended to better frame and deepen our vision statement, which belongs to us all. It is now time for the implementation of our plans, for which I count on the Assembly's continued support. Our vision statement is focused on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly poverty eradication, zero hunger, quality education, climate action and inclusion. Accordingly, I will, with the Assembly's kind support and guidance, pay close attention to the effective implementation of inherited mandates and the following priorities, which I enumerated in my vision statement and at the dialogue with Member States prior to my election.

Item 2 of the provisional agenda

Minute of silent prayer or meditation

The President: In accordance with rule 62 of the rules of procedure, I invite representatives to stand and observe one minute of silent prayer or meditation.

The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silent prayer or meditation.

With regard to the promotion of peace and security, particularly conflict prevention, I will collaborate and coordinate with the Security Council and the Secretariat to ensure that greater attention is paid to prevention rather than reaction to full-blown conflict. I will also advocate for effective early-detection and warning systems, as well as for mediation, negotiation and peaceful settlement of ongoing conflicts. I will work to foster cooperation to address the drivers of conflict, such as poverty, exclusion and illiteracy.

Statement by the President

The President: I am honoured to address everyone present today as President of the seventy-fourth session of the United Nations General Assembly. I am grateful to all Member States for the confidence placed in me and assure them of my commitment to upholding the ethics of the Office of the President of the General Assembly and the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

Secondly, I will focus on increased partnerships for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly poverty eradication, zero hunger and quality education. During this session I urge all Member

I thank former President María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés for her excellent stewardship and tireless efforts in guiding our work during the seventy-third session.

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States to share their experiences on poverty eradication, especially on how improved social-protection systems can benefit vulnerable people who are the most affected by poverty. I request all members to focus on how best to strengthen the United Nations system to ensure that the most vulnerable escape the debilitating web of poverty and hunger by sharing knowledge on sustainable food-production systems, resilient agricultural practices, availability of productive and affordable agricultural machinery, and expansion of entrepreneurial capacity.

Thirdly, quality education is important, and the fact that no nation can develop past its educational capacity, in particular that of its teachers, means that we must work to ensure that Member States can partner on teacher training and access to free and quality primary and secondary education, inter alia. In some communities, what is needed is to build schools, while in many others the focus needs to be on the safety of students. We must devise means to attend to the educational needs of all.

Fourthly, climate change remains a key issue in development, and we must tackle its causes and its repercussions. The recent emergencies in the Bahamas, Mozambique and the Sahel region, among others, remind us of the urgent need to strengthen global action. We must find a way to strengthen that action to tackle climate change.

Fifthly, accentuating inclusion, starting within our Organization in particular, is important. We must continue to ensure that the rights and empowerment of young people, women and the disabled around the world are prioritized.

Without a doubt, we need to forge partnerships to accelerate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and diligently work to find innovative ways to bridge financial gaps.

In one week, our Heads of State and Government will gather in this Hall for the general debate. In parallel, they will also devote attention to the Climate Action Summit, the high-level meeting on universal health coverage, the Sustainable Development Goals summit, the commemoration of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the High-Level Dialogue on Financing for Development, the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons and the mid-term review of the Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action Pathway. During that week, they will deliberate on issues that are key to improving the lives of billions of people around

the world and affirm policies designed to accentuate development. The outcomes of the deliberations during the high-level week will guide our work during the rest of the session.

We must never forget that the world looks up to the United Nations as a veritable vehicle for attaining peace and security, sustainable development and universal human rights. As the most representative deliberative body of the United Nations, the General Assembly needs to redouble its efforts aimed at bridging gaps and act for the common good of the people we serve, in particular as we prepare to celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Organization's founding, and in line with the far-sighted vision of its founders. We must build trust in one another, deepen partnerships and show empathy. This is the only way to resolve the many challenges we face. We will have to strive together to deliver for all.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate that during the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly, the Office of the President will work closely with the Presidents of the Security Council and of the Economic and Social Council as well as the Secretary-General to better ensure success in achieving our shared goals. Although I am cognizant of the competing demands that will burden Member States during this period and beyond, I will continue to knock on their doors and count on their support to make this session of the General Assembly a productive and even a pleasant one. This was what each and every delegation had assured me they will do. I am therefore most assured that we will achieve much during the session.

I now give the floor to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres.

The Secretary-General: I am pleased to be with everyone present for the opening of the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly. Let me begin by warmly congratulating His Excellency Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande of Nigeria on his election as President of the General Assembly. As Nigeria's Permanent Representative here in New York, Mr. Muhammad-Bande brings years of United Nations experience to this role. He also brings valuable insights into some of the pressing peace and security, human rights and sustainable development challenges facing this body, from the spread of violent extremism to the threat of the global climate crisis. I commend the priorities he set in June: peace and security, poverty eradication, zero hunger, quality education, climate action and inclusion

are all central to the sustainable development agenda. I also applaud his emphasis on human rights and gender parity, beginning here at the United Nations.

We have a busy year ahead of us, beginning with five critical summits on climate action, the Sustainable Development Goals, financing for development, universal health care and small island developing States. In all these areas, multi-stakeholder engagement will be essential. I welcome the President's commitment to partnerships as well as his determination to strengthen the relationship between the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council.

Next year, during the seventy-fourth session, we will celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of our Organization. Today's world is rapidly changing. Our challenges are global and increasingly interlinked. As we enter a decade of action on the Sustainable Development Goals, and as we ask for greater urgency and ambition on climate change, with 2020 being a crucial year, we have to convince people that the United Nations is relevant to all and that multilateralism offers real solutions to global challenges.

People's expectations of our Organization, especially the General Assembly and Security Council, are profound. One thing that concerns me in particular, and was echoed by the President-elect in June, is the trust deficit between nations. Transparency, dialogue and greater understanding are essential to alleviating mistrust. The General Assembly is a unique and indispensable forum where the world can come together to advance on sensitive and important issues. It is vital that the world have strong and effective multilateral institutions and architecture and that international relations be based on international law.

We are and will remain an intergovernmental organization. At the same time, we need forms of more intense cooperation with other international and regional organizations — a networked multilateralism — as well as closer contacts with businesses, civil society and other stakeholders — an inclusive multilateralism. Such a networked and inclusive multilateralism will help us overcome the challenges of our current era.

As we open the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly, let me wish all delegations a busy and successful year as we work together to achieve our common goals of peace, prosperity and opportunity for all on a healthy planet.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

Item 141 of the provisional agenda

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/74/327)

The President: I should like, in keeping with established practice, to invite the attention of the General Assembly to document A/74/327. It contains a letter from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the General Assembly, in which he informs the Assembly that three Member States are in arrears in the payment of their financial contributions to the United Nations within the terms of Article 19 of the Charter.

I would like to remind delegations that, under Article 19 of the Charter,

“A Member of the United Nations which is in arrears in the payment of its financial contributions to the Organization shall have no vote in the General Assembly if the amount of its arrears equals or exceeds the amount of the contributions due from it for the preceding two full years. The General Assembly may, nevertheless, permit such a Member to vote if it is satisfied that the failure to pay is due to conditions beyond the control of the Member.”

May I take it that the General Assembly takes note of the information contained in document A/74/327?

It was so decided.

Item 3 of the provisional agenda

Credentials of representatives to the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly

(a) Appointment of the members of the Credentials Committee

The President: Rule 28 of the rules of procedure provides that the General Assembly at the beginning of each session shall appoint, on the proposal of the President, a Credentials Committee consisting of nine members.

Accordingly, it is proposed that, for the seventy-fourth session, the Credentials Committee should consist of the following Member States: Barbados, Botswana, China, Mauritius, Nepal, the Russian Federation, San Marino, the United States of America and Uruguay.

May I take it that the States that I have just mentioned are hereby appointed members of the Credentials Committee?

It was so decided.

The President: The representative of Honduras has asked for the floor.

Ms. Flores (Honduras): Honduras, an original Member of the United Nations, recognizes what derives from the Charter of the United Nations and the rules of the General Assembly. We stand for equality in the Assembly and for all States to be represented at all levels in guiding the agenda forward. We stand by the rule of equitable geographical rotation in the presidency of the General Assembly, which carries the full weight of the unique principle of equality of all nations, large and small.

It is important to point out that none of the nations, however small they may be, are to be judged to be of lesser value than any of the others. No nation should presume to have more rights, such as to hold the same position more than once while other countries that have not had an equal opportunity are relegated to an indefinite waiting list. The rule applies so that all regions have the possibility of holding the office and that all the nations making up a region have the same guarantee of not being excluded. We assume that, in this Assembly of identical rights, none is above the other. Anything contrary to that is in violation of the Charter.

Honduras stands for the right for each Member State to be represented and hold positions up to the highest office in the General Assembly, fully participate in its committees and bodies without being subject to preferential, biased or prejudicial treatment and be ensured of transparent, free elections. Perhaps not everyone is aware of the impact of all the transgressions that have been made to the equality-based order. Nevertheless, these transgressions have fractured the foundation and trust of the Assembly. If we are conscientious, it is not too late to make amends and restore the values that have given purpose and vision to this house of nations and are essential if we are truly here to make a difference for humankind. Only respect for equity augurs peace, harmony and understanding for the higher cause of civilized coexistence among the peoples of the world.

The President: Delegations are reminded that credentials should be submitted to the Office of

Legal Affairs, as announced in the *Journal of the United Nations*.

Items 7 and 140 of the provisional agenda

Organization of work of the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly

Pattern of conferences

Letter from the Chair of the Committee on Conferences (A/74/340)

The President: The Assembly will now turn its attention to document A/74/340, which contains the text of a letter dated 3 September 2019 from the Chair of the Committee on Conferences addressed to the President of the General Assembly. Members are aware that, pursuant to section 1, paragraph 7, of resolution 40/243, of 18 December 1985, no subsidiary organ of the General Assembly should be permitted to meet at United Nations Headquarters during the main part of a regular session of the Assembly, unless explicitly authorized by the Assembly.

On the strict understanding that meetings would have to be accommodated within available facilities and services, authorization is thus sought for the following subsidiary organs and entities: the United Nations Appeals Tribunal; the Independent Audit Advisory Committee; the Group of Governmental Experts on advancing responsible State behaviour in cyberspace in the context of international security; the Open-ended Working Group on developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security; the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People; the Committee on Relations with the Host Country; the Conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction; and the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme/the United Nations Population Fund/the United Nations Office for Project Services.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to authorize those subsidiary organs and entities of the Assembly to meet during the main part of the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 3.25 p.m.