



Joseph Deiss

Closing statement in the general debate
of the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly

New York, 29 September 2010

Excellencies, Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have arrived at the end of our general debate of the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly. I would like to thank you all for your contributions. I am pleased that everyone has had an opportunity to speak and for the high quality of the debate. I trust that everyone who spoke has been heard by all.

Now is the time to take stock so that we can make greater progress, together, on the issues of crucial importance for our common well-being.

I have been struck by the convergence of concerns expressed not only from this rostrum, but also during the many bilateral meetings that I had the honour to host on the sidelines of this debate.

If our concerns are shared, why then have so many tragic situations lasted for so long? Have we really taken the time to speak to one another, to search for solutions and to achieve reconciliation? Or have we merely been content to repeat the same things year after year? Let us put aside electoral cycles and purely national interests so that we can forge consensus solutions that will enable us to move forward.

The need to consolidate the still fragile global economic situation, to improve poverty reduction and to redouble efforts for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals were emphasized in many statements.

In this regard, a strong message was conveyed by the Summit on the Millennium Development Goals and this is welcome: we have reaffirmed our determination to keep the promise made in the year 2000 and we have a plan of action.

What we need now is for our words to be followed up by actions. Too often in the past, these words have gone unheeded. We cannot afford to disappoint the expectations of the millions of men, women and children living in poverty. We will need to closely monitor the fulfilment of our commitments. The General Assembly must - and will - contribute towards this.

The crucial role of the United Nations in promoting human rights and combating human trafficking was emphasized, as was the importance of establishing UN Women for gender equality and the empowerment of women. The establishment of this entity, which brings together resources and mandates for a greater impact, is an example that could be followed in other areas.

Many delegations spoke about issues of peace and security, the peaceful settlement of regional conflicts, migration, and efforts to combat terrorism and organized crime. The importance of disarmament in the promotion of peace and development was highlighted. The essential role of United Nations peacekeeping operations was repeatedly acknowledged. We should never forget that this is our primary calling.

But the international community still has much to do to ensure that the United Nations fulfils its primary responsibility for the maintenance of peace and security. The situation in the Middle East, Sudan, the Balkans and too many other regions of the world reminds us of this on a daily basis.

Will we be brave enough to move beyond past deadlock and oft-repeated positions of principle and be sincere in our efforts to begin the reconciliation that our citizens so desire?

There was also praise for the work of the United Nations and its specialized agencies in the wake of the natural disasters in Haiti and Pakistan.

Speaker after speaker dwelt on risks connected with nature, including climate change, the loss of biodiversity and scarcity of resources, and reiterated the need for worldwide efforts to address those risks. The same appeal was made at our high-level meetings on biodiversity and the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy.

The issue of sustainable development was mentioned in this connection. During this session of the General Assembly, I intend to step up discussion of this subject, and particularly of the green economy, to contribute to preparing for the Rio+20 Conference in 2012.

Time does not permit me to list every subject mentioned on this podium, but all of them are essential to the common good and all require a worldwide response.

Many delegations raised the matter of global governance, the theme chosen for the general debate. The fact that the number of Heads of State and Government in New York is higher than usual testifies to the considerable importance that most of you attach to reinforcing such governance. I am pleased that the theme of the debate was such a successful choice.

The G20 is an unavoidable reality, and many delegations have pointed out its importance. However, as one of the G20 members indicated, there needs to be open and ongoing dialogue with the General Assembly in order for the G20 to retain its relevance and legitimacy.

We need to find the ideal combination of legitimacy and effectiveness. We must improve the machinery of information, consultation and cooperation between the United Nations and other players connected with global governance.

As a first practical step, I intend to launch an informal dialogue with the Secretary-General and the G20 host country to take place before and after G20 summits. There is also the possibility of an informal debate in the second half of my term to explore in a more general way the routes towards a system of global governance that is more representative, inclusive and open, and which encompasses civil society and the private sector as important players in the concept.

We believe in the value of the United Nations. Many leaders have said that the Organization is the centrepiece of the global system of governance. It is universal, and enjoys a unique legitimacy. But the lack of leadership and the need for major reform are also topics of frequent comment.

While we agree on the importance of the tool that is the United Nations, are we making the best use of that tool? Are we doing what is needed to help us use it better?

Are we ready to strengthen the Organization today? Are we not in the process of re-creating the United Nations outside the United Nations by multiplying discussion forums and decision-making bodies? Would it not be better for us to act resolutely to adapt the Organization rapidly to current realities?

Essential reforms are under way, especially with regard to the revitalization of the General Assembly and the reform of the Security Council, but also regarding the review of the Human Rights Council and of the Peacebuilding Commission. We must move them forward! We must also reassert the value of the economic organizations of the United Nations and allow them fully to perform the functions for which they were created.

It is clearly up to you, the Member States, to make of the United Nations a strong tool that can play a central role in facing these global challenges and work for the common good.

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to conclude my remarks on a more personal note.

In following our debates over the past few days, I have been struck by the generosity and determination unanimously expressed in favour of achieving the Millennium Development Goals. This sends a strong message about the capacity of the international community to act in solidarity.

I have been impressed as well by the many statements to the effect that the world and our Organization currently find themselves at a turning point, but I have also asked myself if, in addition to making such statements, we are putting the same energy into ensuring the proper functioning of global governance and the fulfilment of our primary mandates, which are peace and security.

I sometimes have the feeling that we content ourselves with repeating worn-out sketches of ideas, looking for short-lived triumphs or simply accepting the status quo.

To make true breakthroughs on the major projects related to global governance, protection of human rights and preservation of the planet, that is, to make progress on our grand plans to create a world of peace, well-being and friendship, we will need a great deal of creativity and a great deal of generosity.

Let us not fear our own courage.