



General Assembly

Fifty-seventh session

88th plenary meeting

Friday, 6 June 2003, 10 a.m.

New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Kavan (Czech Republic)

The meeting was called to order at 10:20 a.m.

Agenda item 17 (continued)

Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments

(f) Appointment of a member of the Joint Inspection Unit

Note by the President of the General Assembly (A/57/112)

The President: As indicated in document A/57/112, in accordance with the procedures described in article 3, paragraph 1, of the statute of the Joint Inspection Unit, and having consulted the regional group concerned, as well as through a consultation by secret ballot with the General Assembly, I requested Trinidad and Tobago to propose a candidate.

As further indicated in document A/57/112, as a result of the consultations held in accordance with article 3, paragraph 2, of the statute of the Joint Inspection Unit, including consultations with the President of the Economic and Social Council and with the Secretary-General in his capacity as Chairman of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, I submit to the Assembly the candidature of Mr. Christopher Thomas of Trinidad and Tobago for appointment as a member of the Joint Inspection Unit for a five-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2004 and expiring on 31 December 2008.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to appoint that candidate?

It was so decided.

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (f) of agenda item 17?

It was so decided.

(h) Confirmation of the appointment of the Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

Note by the Secretary-General (A/57/109)

The President: Members will recall that, by its decision 53/321 of 18 February 1999, the General Assembly, on the proposal of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, confirmed the extension of the appointment of Mr. Rubens Ricupero as Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development for another term of office of four years, beginning on 15 September 1999 and ending on 14 September 2003.

In paragraph 3 of his note, the Secretary-General proposes to extend the appointment of Mr. Rubens Ricupero as Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development for a period of one year, that is to say, from 15 September 2003 to 14 September 2004.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

May I take it that the General Assembly, on the proposal of the Secretary-General, wishes to confirm the extension of the appointment of Mr. Rubens Ricupero as Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development for a period of one year, from 15 September 2003 to 14 September 2004?

It was so decided.

Mr. Bennouna (Morocco): It is for me a great pleasure to congratulate, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, Mr. Rubens Ricupero on the extension of his appointment as Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) for a new period of one year. I would like to express the full satisfaction of the Group of 77 and China at his confirmation by the Secretary-General in his tasks and to assure him of our full support and friendship. This confirmation is taking place at a very timely moment, as UNCTAD is engaged in the preparatory process for its eleventh Ministerial Conference, scheduled for 2004.

Over the past years, Mr. Ricupero has been fully committed to supporting developing countries in their development efforts and dedicated to sharing with our Group the same concerns and challenges with regard to the development dimension of globalization and trade liberalization. This period has been marked by a real transformation of the international trade agenda and dramatic changes in the development paradigms, which UNCTAD, under the leadership of Mr. Ricupero, has greatly influenced through its invaluable expertise.

Our Group continues to believe that UNCTAD is playing a crucial role in helping developing countries reach their national development policy objectives, particularly in trade, investment, technology and enterprise development. The Group of 77 and China are convinced that enhancing trade, technology and investment is one of the key factors for development and growth in developing countries, as well as for the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

Enhancing trade, investment and technology in developing countries will assist in integrating the developing countries into the global economy, will help establish the terms of a world in which globalization has a human face and will help eradicate poverty around the world.

The Group of 77 and China look forward to working with Mr. Rubens Ricupero during the next term of his appointment and, together with him, will give further momentum to the development dimension of trade and investment on the route towards the eleventh Ministerial Conference of UNCTAD.

Mr. Chaudhry (Pakistan): I am speaking on behalf of Ambassador Munir Akram, who, due to another engagement, could not be here personally. The delegation of Pakistan welcomes the extension of the appointment of Mr. Ricupero.

Over the past four years, Mr. Ricupero has assiduously built up the stature and performance of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). It is now a credible name in the world of trade and development. Issues of international trade form the bedrock of today's global development agenda. UNCTAD, being the trade arm of the United Nations, is in a unique position to undertake an integrated treatment of trade and development and interrelated issues in the areas of finance, technology, investment and sustainable development. To that, under Mr. Ricupero, UNCTAD has strengthened its partnership with the World Trade Organization (WTO) in addressing issues of interest to United Nations Member States in the post-Doha work programme. UNCTAD is also an important player in the financing for development process.

With Mr. Supachai, an UNCTAD veteran, now serving as Director-General of WTO, we are confident that Mr. Ricupero will be able to sustain the energy and dynamism that now enthuses the relationship between the two organizations. We would like particularly to commend Mr. Ricupero for strengthening UNCTAD's role in the provision of technical assistance tailored to the needs of developing countries; likewise, his efforts to bolster the research policy analysis and data collection capabilities of UNCTAD must also be recognized.

On behalf of Pakistan, let me extend to him our heartiest felicitations and fullest support and cooperation.

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (h) of agenda item 17?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 4

Election of the President of the General Assembly

Election of the President of the General Assembly for the fifty-eighth session

The President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 56/509 of 8 July 2002, I now invite members of the General Assembly to proceed to the election of the President of the General Assembly for the fifty-eighth session.

May I recall that, in accordance with paragraph 1 of the annex to General Assembly resolution 33/138, the President of the General Assembly for the fifty-eighth session should be elected from among the Latin American and Caribbean States. In this connection, I was informed by the Chairman of the Group of the Latin American and Caribbean States for the month of February 2003 that the group has endorsed the Minister of External Affairs, International Trade and Civil Aviation of Saint Lucia, His Excellency the Honourable Julian R. Hunte, for the presidency of the General Assembly for the fifty-eighth session.

Taking into account the provisions of paragraph 16 of annex VI to the rules of procedure, I therefore declare His Excellency the Honourable Julian R. Hunte of Saint Lucia elected by acclamation President of the General Assembly for the fifty-eighth session.

I extend my sincere congratulations to His Excellency the Honourable Julian R. Hunte.

I now give the floor to the Minister of External Affairs, International Trade and Civil Aviation of Saint Lucia, His Excellency the Honourable Julian R. Hunte, who has just been elected President of the General Assembly for the fifty-eighth session.

Mr. Hunte (Saint Lucia): I wish to express my appreciation and that of the Government of Saint Lucia to the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States for its endorsement of Saint Lucia's candidature for the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session. I wish also to thank members of this Assembly for the confidence placed in me in electing me as their incoming President. My endorsement and election are a source of great pride and satisfaction to my Government and to me.

Allow me to assure you, Sir, that you have the continuing support of my Government, which will continue to work with you and Member States in

guiding the affairs of the General Assembly through this most difficult period.

Events over the last two years have proven beyond any shadow of a doubt that no nation is an island unto itself. No nation can protect its people completely from cross-border problems. The unprecedented challenges that face our Organization — ranging from HIV/AIDS and, recently, SARS, to transnational crime and terrorism — know no borders and respect no boundaries. Only international cooperation offers any hope that, collectively, we can overcome the problems that threaten humanity as a whole.

There can be no nation in today's world that does not value the role or recognize the importance of the United Nations as the premier Organization addressing the myriad challenges that confront our global community. Some continue to question the relevance of the United Nations without offering a viable alternative that respects the very principles of democracy and rights they propound within their own borders. The truth is that, worldwide, people are deeply committed to the United Nations. People do sincerely believe that the world would be a safer, more secure place and that all would have a better standard of living if the Charter of this body were to be respected and upheld. Therefore, although there may be cause for concern, we have no reason to despair about the United Nations and the principles and multilateral approaches for which it stands.

While the United Nations remains vital, there is no doubt that it requires some reform. No institution created in the conditions that existed more than half a century ago can claim to remain relevant in all its aspects unless it keeps pace with a rapidly changing world. We must therefore look to the future in determining the role which the United Nations will play in the service of humanity — a role that respects the rule of law, that upholds the principles of democracy, that reinforces machinery for curbing violations of human rights, that promotes gender equality, that acts against tyranny no less than it acts against aggression, and that offers opportunity for the poor to rise out of poverty even as it ensures economic and social advancement for all peoples. The United Nations must remain vigilant to the role it must play, as solutions are formulated and implemented for critical international issues of peace and security, whether in Iraq, the Middle East or Africa.

I wish to assure Member States and the Secretary-General of my deep commitment to the United Nations and pledge to do my part to enhance its relevance for all nations and peoples. It is my intention as President of the General Assembly to focus the Assembly's efforts on the full implementation of the outcomes of more than a decade of United Nations summits and conferences and the United Nations development agenda, including the Millennium Development Goals, for unless we address such critical and pressing issues as poverty, HIV/AIDS, the environment and the vulnerability of small States with deeds and not just words, global stability will be a desired but ever elusive ideal and safety and security will remain in peril.

I am keenly aware that the General Assembly must always be responsive to its membership and to the international environment in which it functions. I wish to assure the Assembly that it is my firm intention to reach out to all Member States and regional groups, and to the Secretary-General and his staff, in seeking to build consensus on the broad range of issues the General Assembly addresses, including those that may be controversial or potentially divisive. In such an approach lies the real revitalization of this, the most important organ of the United Nations.

When in September of this year I receive the baton of President from you, Sir, the Assembly will, in one seamless moment, continue its critical work as the United Nations organ — larger than any one nation — imbued with the authority of all nations and empowered to safeguard the welfare of all peoples. No other body is so empowered.

It is notable that the presidency of this singularly important world body will pass to a representative of the smallest country ever to hold this office. Thus will the United Nations reaffirm its faith in the equal right of nations, large and small, as enunciated in the Charter.

I am confident that I will have the full cooperation of the members of the Assembly, the Secretary-General and his staff, and the principal organs of the United Nations in building firm foundations for a future in which the peoples of the world can develop and prosper in a climate of peace and cooperation.

The President: I should like once again to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the Minister of External Affairs, International Trade and Civil Aviation of Saint Lucia, the Honourable Julian Hunte, on his election as

President of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session.

I intend to make the most of the remaining three months until the end of the fifty-seventh session to work closely with President-elect Hunte in order to facilitate a smooth and efficient transition between us as well as between our staffs. I hope that this will set a good precedent, not only for future sessions of the General Assembly but also for other institutions of the United Nations.

I now call on Mr. Mohamed Bennouna, Permanent Representative of Morocco and Chairman of the Group of 77 and China, who will speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

Mr. Bennouna (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): It is true that I am wearing several hats right now, but at this moment I am speaking in my capacity as Chairman of the Group of African States. I have the pleasure and the honour to extend my warmest congratulations to the Honourable Julian Hunte, Minister of External Affairs, International Trade and Civil Aviation of Saint Lucia, on his unanimous election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session. I wish to assure him of the full support of the Group of African States, so that the work of the next session will be crowned with success.

The Group of African States will continue to work for the revitalization of the General Assembly and for the streamlining of its agenda and working methods, so that the Assembly, like the other principal organs of the Organization — and perhaps to an even greater extent — can express fully the concerns of the international community, given that the General Assembly has the privilege of including all of the members of the international community.

The Honourable Julian Hunte has just taken on a commitment of the same nature; I can assure him that he will receive all of the necessary support from us and from all Africans.

I should like to take this opportunity to say that these efforts at revitalization, which to date have had only some procedural successes, have nonetheless allowed us today to elect the President of the General Assembly, and will allow us later, following this meeting, to elect the Chairmen of the main committees. This procedural method has had excellent results, as it has allowed us to ensure a better transition between the outgoing and the incoming Presidents and better

planning in terms of joint preparations for the work of the next session of the General Assembly.

We hope that these revitalization efforts, aimed at adapting the General Assembly to the needs of the twenty-first century, will continue under the presidency of The Honourable Julian Hunte.

The Group of African States wishes also to pay a well-deserved tribute to Jan Kavan, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic for his outstanding presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session.

I am particularly pleased this time as well, in my capacity as the Chairman of the Group of 77 and China, to recognize the extremely valuable work that we have been able to do with President Kavan, who has personally committed himself to working on key issues of this fifty-seventh session, in particular in the Working Group on the Integrated and Coordinated Implementation of and Follow-up to the Outcomes of Major United Nations Conferences and Summits since the Millennium Declaration, whose work, I hope, will be completed this evening.

Mr. Kavan has also been personally involved in efforts to fine-tune a draft resolution on conflict resolution, which will also be very successful. The Group of African States thanks President Kavan for his outstanding efforts to restore the General Assembly to its position in the forefront of the United Nations.

The President: I give the floor to Mr. Kishore Mahbubani, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Asian States.

Mr. Mahbubani (Singapore): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Asian Group. We warmly congratulate The Honourable Julian Hunte, Minister of External Affairs, International Trade and Civil Aviation of Saint Lucia, on his election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session, and we assure him of our full support.

We are happy to note that, for the second year running, the General Assembly has continued the practice of electing the President of the Assembly three months before he takes office. As Ambassador Mohamed Bennouna said a few minutes ago, that arrangement ensures a smooth handover in the President's Office, and is thus invaluable in ensuring an effective General Assembly. We have no doubts in our minds that Mr. Hunte is eminently qualified to continue the good work of our current President, Mr. Jan Kavan.

Mr. Hunte has served his country with great distinction in both the public and the private sectors. Many of us of course had the good fortune to welcome Mr. Hunte personally when he served as the Permanent Representative of Saint Lucia, from 1998 to 2001. I am sure that he will bring the same integrity, dedication and diplomatic acumen to his job as President of the General Assembly. Indeed, in the remarks he made earlier, he clearly spelled out many of the challenges that our global community faces. We wish him great success in meeting those challenges.

On a personal note, let me add that, as current Chairman of the Forum of Small States, my delegation is especially delighted to see a fellow member of the Forum assume the august position of the presidency of the Assembly. As Mr. Hunte said, Saint Lucia may be the smallest State ever to assume the presidency. But we know that he has a big heart and strong courage. We know he will do well.

Finally, it may be useful to remind ourselves that in chapter VIII of the Millennium Declaration we resolved to "reaffirm the central position of the General Assembly as the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative organ of the United Nations" (resolution 55/2, para. 30). We look forward to working closely with President-elect Hunte so that we can continue to achieve that goal at the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

The President: I call on the representative of the Czech Republic, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

Mr. Kmoníček (Czech Republic): Allow me, on behalf of the regional Group of Eastern European States, to congratulate the newly elected President of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, The Honourable Mr. Julian Hunte. At the same time, let me also express our thanks to the current President for all the achievements of his successful presidency. We share the firm belief that the States Members of the General Assembly will together be able to enjoy the fruits of the results we have already achieved, as well as those that are still to come before September of this year. Our regional Group is deeply committed to all the major tasks and values of the General Assembly. We will provide our full support to the next President, and to his entire team, as he proceeds to reach for success in his demanding position.

The President: I call on the representative of Bolivia, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Mr. Ortiz Gandarillas (Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): In my capacity as Chairman of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States for the month of June, I have the great honour to take the floor on this occasion to express, on behalf of the countries members of the Group, our most sincere congratulations to The Honourable Julian Hunte of Saint Lucia on his well-deserved election by acclamation as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session.

Mr. Hunte brings with him a lengthy and rich experience in public and private affairs in the service of his country. He currently holds the high office of Minister of External Affairs, International Trade and Civil Aviation of Saint Lucia. He also serves as a senator in his country's Parliament. He has a wealth of experience at the United Nations, having served as the Permanent Representative of his country to the Organization from 1998 to 2001. Mr. Hunte is also currently the Chairman of a group of private companies in the financial sector, as well as a very active member of civil society in Saint Lucia, having served as the head of various civic institutions.

We believe that the new way of electing the President of the General Assembly — 90 days in advance of the assumption of office — is a very positive step, in that it makes it possible for the new President to have a sensible period of time in which to become fully prepared, in terms of both substantive and procedural matters.

The Group of Latin American and Caribbean States is very pleased that on this occasion the Group is being represented by Saint Lucia in the presidency of the General Assembly. We are convinced and confident that, thanks to The Honourable Julian Hunte's experience and eminent personal qualities, he will be able to respond with wisdom, transparency and great effectiveness to the challenges associated with his new, lofty and sensitive position as the President of the General Assembly. At the same time, we would like to assure the President-elect that he can count on the fullest and most resolute support and cooperation from our region. We would also like to convey our gratitude to the other regional groups for the support and cooperation that we are certain they will extend to Saint Lucia's future presidency.

I cannot let this opportunity pass without conveying to Ambassador Rubens Ricuperero the warmest congratulations of the Group of Latin

American and Caribbean States on the extension of his mandate to serve as Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) for another year. We are all well aware of the record he has compiled, and of the efficiency of the work he has done, as the head of UNCTAD. The decision to extend his mandate was a wise one.

I would also like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, to convey to you, Sir, our sincerest appreciation and congratulations on the work you have been carrying out with such efficiency, wisdom and transparency as President of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. Believe me, Mr. President, when I say that this tribute is not merely a matter of protocol; rather, it expresses the genuine view and feeling of our region.

The President: I call on the representative of Austria, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States.

Mr. Pfanzelter (Austria): On behalf of the Western European and other States, I would like to express our sincere congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Julian Robert Hunte, Minister for External Affairs, International Trade and Civil Aviation of Saint Lucia, on his election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session. The United Nations family is very pleased to welcome back Mr. Hunte, whose term as Permanent Representative of Saint Lucia to the United Nations in New York, from 1998 to 2001, was very successful. He is, as we all know, eminently qualified to assume the presidency of the Assembly. We are convinced that, given his vast experience in business, politics and diplomacy, and his strong commitment to the United Nations, he will provide the leadership and vision needed at this critical juncture in international relations. He will be able to build on the impressive legacy of your tenure, Mr. President. Let me assure the newly elected President of the full support and cooperation of the Western European and other States.

The President: I invite representatives to remain seated for the consecutive meetings of the six Main Committees for the election of their Chairmen, which will be followed immediately by the 89th plenary meeting for the election of the 21 Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly for the fifty-eighth session.

The meeting rose at 11.05 a.m.