



General Assembly

Sixty-sixth session

131st plenary meeting
Monday, 17 September 2012, 3 p.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar)

The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

Agenda item 54 (continued)

Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects

Report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) (A/66/428/Add.1)

The President: If there is no proposal under rule 66 of the rules of procedure, I shall take it that the General Assembly decides not to discuss the report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) that is before the Assembly today.

It was so decided.

The President: Statements will therefore be limited to explanations of vote.

The positions of delegations regarding the recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) have been made clear in the Committee and are reflected in the relevant official records.

May I remind Members that under paragraph 7 of decision 34/401, the General Assembly agreed that

“When the same draft resolution is considered in a Main Committee and in plenary meeting, a delegation should, as far as possible, explain its vote only once, i.e., either in the Committee or in plenary meeting, unless that delegation’s vote in plenary meeting is different from its vote in the Committee.”

May I also remind delegations that, also in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Before we begin to take action on the recommendation, I should like to advise representatives that we are going to proceed to take a decision in the same manner as was done in the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), unless notified otherwise in advance.

The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) in paragraph 6 of its report, entitled “Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects”.

The Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 66/297).

The President: I now give the floor to those representatives wishing to speak in explanation of position on the resolution just adopted.

Mr. Oyarzábal (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): I speak on behalf of Brazil, Uruguay and my own country, Argentina.

We welcome the endeavours of the Chair of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), Ambassador Ogwu; the Chair of

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the Working Group of the Whole, Ambassador Gilles Rivard; and his team, allowing for the adoption of the substantive report A/66/428/Add.1, which contains significant recommendations.

It is extremely important that, despite the difficulties with which we are all familiar, we have managed to achieve the approval of this substantive report, which is a step forward, with important recommendations on the relationship between peacekeeping and peacebuilding, the safety of our Blue Helmets and the need for peacekeeping operations to possess the necessary resources and tools to enable them to carry out their increasingly complex tasks involving the protection of civilians and its challenges. We cannot lose sight of the collective progress that we have all achieved.

The Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (C-34) is a fundamental space for the voices of countries contributing troops, police and civilians to peacekeeping missions; countries hosting operations; those providing material resources — in brief, all those involved in such endeavours. The C-34 is the global forum where, by its very nature, the global partnership, which is essential to the success of peacekeeping operations, must necessarily be reflected. Its importance derives from those shared visions and each specific contribution. In order for these important contributions to have an impact, the Committee must be able to fully address all issues relevant to peacekeeping missions, in accordance with its own mandate.

With the increasing complexity of peacekeeping operations, we are obviously dealing with financial and administrative issues, such as costs for troop reimbursement, conduct and discipline issues, and gender and child protection issues. These are structural issues that have an ever-increasing impact on the daily lives of our Blue Helmets.

The difficulty in achieving consensus on problematic issues is also a result of that complexity. We need to reflect together on how to ensure that the Committee and its recommendations remain centre stage, without allowing certain issues to be taboo, even if they directly affect the functioning of a mission.

Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina have actively contributed to reaching consensus, understanding the specificities of national positions on an issue that is so important for all of our countries. It is crucial that we work together to create solutions that allow for positive convergence in a climate of confidence, greater dialogue

and openness. It is therefore also vital that we not lose sight of all the contributions to the Committee's report. However important individual contributions may be, it is all of the recommendations together that make up our significant contribution and the evidence of the cumulative progress achieved by our joint efforts.

In the future, it will be important to strengthen this joint vision and the collective and operational work that transcends the crises of the day. Our delegations will continue to pursue this objective, working in the spirit of the friends of the Committee, all of whom believe in its relevance and trust that we can move forward together.

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 54?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 19 (continued)

Sustainable development

The President: Members will recall that, at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 16 September 2011, the General Assembly decided to allocate agenda item 19 to the Second Committee. Members will also recall that, at its 108th plenary meeting, on 16 May 2012, the Assembly decided to consider agenda item 19 directly in plenary meeting, adopted decision 66/561, and, under the same item, adopted decision 66/544 B at its 109th plenary meeting, on 21 May. Members will further recall that, under agenda item 19, the Assembly adopted resolution 66/288 at its 123rd plenary meeting, on 27 July.

As members are aware, in a letter dated 13 September 2012, I circulated for consideration by Member States language for an oral decision on an open working group on sustainable development.

I give the floor to the representative of Brazil.

Mrs. Ribeiro Viotti (Brazil): I appreciate the opportunity to provide an account of the consultations on the constitution of the working group on sustainable development goals. In discharge of the task you have entrusted to me, Sir, I started a process of consultations with the Chairs of the regional groups in mid-July. This process continued through the months of August and September.

During those consultations, different formulas for the allocation of seats among regional groups were

explored. We also discussed the general provisions contained in paragraph 248 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (resolution 66/288) and exchanged views on the meaning of the word “open” qualifying the working group.

Consultations have shown that an even distribution of seats among regional groups is not a formula that is acceptable to all groups. Therefore, we proceeded to examine other approaches. Two recent examples were brought up in our discussions: the establishment of the Human Rights Council and of the UN-Women Executive Board. The analysis of the distribution of seats in those bodies showed that a proportional approach was applied in a manner that took into account the differences in size of the regional groups. It was felt that such a basis could provide a way forward in finalizing the constitution of the working group on sustainable development goals.

During the discussions, it was noted that the allocation of seats within regional groups will also be a complex exercise, given the number of interested Member States. In this regard, it was suggested that such a process could be facilitated if the word “open” qualifying the working group were to be interpreted as allowing for an inclusive participation of all Member States and for the possibility of their presenting proposals. It was felt that such an understanding could be part of the decision establishing the working group.

I conveyed those elements through an aide-memoire to the Chairs of the regional groups on 17 August.

During subsequent consultations with the Chairs of the regional groups, on 5 September it became clear that neither an even distribution of seats among regional groups nor a strictly proportional approach were able to garner consensus. In this context, I proposed the consideration of a compromise formula, consisting of an arrangement that would start from an even distribution and then provide for adjustments that would take into account the fact that the regional groups differ in size. The most numerous groups would be assigned an additional seat and the least numerous groups would have five seats each. This proposal was then conveyed in writing to the Chairs of the regional groups for further consultations.

It is my view that we have tried all possible options. However, a group of Member States feels that further consultations are required on how the working group will be constituted and on the elaboration of the principle

of openness to be applied to the working group. In the light of this, I propose that we defer a decision on the constitution of the working group.

I take this opportunity to thank the Chairs of the regional groups for the months of July, August and September for their cooperation, and I thank you, Mr. President, and the members of your team for the trust and support extended to me.

The President: May I therefore take it that the General Assembly decides to reach an agreement on the distribution of seats of the open working group, established pursuant to paragraph 248 of the annex of resolution 66/288 of 27 July 2012, among United Nations regional groups and on the specific representatives who will be designated by Member States to occupy those seats at the beginning of its sixty-seventh session?

It was so decided.

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 19?

It was so decided.

The President: I now give the floor to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon.

The Secretary-General: Let us think back to September 2011, when the current session of the General Assembly began. We were deep in preparation for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). The global economic and financial crisis was continuing to reverse hard-won development gains and take a toll on jobs. The transformation in the Arab world was in its early stages, creating hope and apprehension side by side.

It has been an eventful year — a period of transition, a time of tests. The Rio+20 conference produced a solid, encouraging outcome, including agreement to launch a set of sustainable development goals and many tangible commitments that will make a difference.

The General Assembly has been the venue for important discussions on eradicating poverty and easing the plight of the vulnerable. It held an important meeting on nuclear safety and security, as well as the first-ever High-level Meeting on Non-communicable Diseases, the leading cause of deaths around the world. The Assembly focused welcome attention on mediation and, just last week, adopted the far-reaching resolution 66/291 on human security. When the Security Council

was not able to act on the violence and repression in Syria, the Assembly stepped in proactively and has maintained its vigilance.

The Assembly has also sought to promote mutual understanding and a culture of peace across the world, including through the Alliance of Civilizations. As the troubling events of recent days make clear, that must remain a priority. The sixty-sixth session leaves a legacy of achievement, showing again the invaluable role and voice of the General Assembly as the Organization's leading deliberative body.

I would like to thank His Excellency Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser for his leadership and strong commitment as President of this august Assembly throughout this period of dramatic developments and complex challenges. His extensive diplomatic experience has served him well. He has guided the Assembly with skill and sensitivity and reached out to partners in civil society, academia, the business community and the philanthropic world. He and I have had a very productive working relationship. We have jointly addressed many pressing problems. We travelled together to Libya and Somalia. I thank him for his friendship and collaboration.

In his first remarks to the Assembly as President, Ambassador Al-Nasser noted that "the sands are shifting" and that the sixty-sixth session was "our opportunity to define our place in this decisive moment in history" (A/66/PV.1). He has helped to meet that challenge.

Of course, the sands continue to shift. We have much work ahead. We must press ahead to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by the agreed deadline of 2015. We must articulate a bold and inspirational post-2015 development agenda. We must sharpen the full range of our tools for peace and human rights. We must strengthen this Organization — its effectiveness, its representativeness — to cope with an era of budgetary constraint and to meet the high expectations of the people of the world.

I thank the General Assembly for its contributions at the sixty-sixth session.

Mr. President, during your tenure as President of the General Assembly, the Assembly also instituted a new observance on the United Nations calendar: the International Day of Happiness. Let us hope that through our work, including in the new session that

begins tomorrow, we can turn that aspiration into reality.

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

I thank all those present here today for joining us in this closing of the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly. This has indeed been a remarkable and momentous session. The events of the past year have formed a moment in history that will remain in our minds for decades to come. It has been a year when the impact of the global financial and economic crisis put the international community to a challenging test. There have been serious conflicts, but there has also been renewed hope as countries have emerged from conflict to peace. Populations across the world have continued to call for freedom, dignity, peace and justice.

Faced with such challenges and opportunities, I am proud to say that the General Assembly has stood strong, active and responsive. New partnerships have been formed and political commitments renewed, and we have seen consensus, action and results become the order of the day. It has been a source of profound honour and pride for me to lead the United Nations membership during this critical moment in history. It has been my privilege to work with all representatives as President of the General Assembly at this session. I thank them most sincerely for their cooperation and support and for their enduring commitment to the mission of the United Nations.

I would like to note in particular the strong working relationship and great friendship that I have enjoyed with the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon. Determined to enhance the coherence of the efforts of the United Nations, the Secretary-General and I have worked in close partnership throughout the year. It has been my deep privilege to work with Mr. Ban, who is a true leader — dedicated, genuine and relentless in his pursuit of a better world.

Our work during this sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly would not have achieved the results we have achieved without the full and remarkable support of the State of Qatar. I wish therefore to express our very special gratitude and appreciation to His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, the Emir of the State of Qatar; His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, the Heir Apparent of the State of Qatar; and His Excellency Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabr Al-Thani, Prime Minister and Minister for

Foreign Affairs of the State of Qatar. Their immense support for and commitment to the United Nations have helped us greatly in serving the United Nations and the world.

As the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly draws to a close, I would like to highlight what I believe to be our main achievements during the session. To start with, there is no doubt that we are living through an extraordinary moment in the history of the Middle East and North Africa. Our attention to the region now extends beyond the Arab-Israeli conflict to developments concerning the Arab Awakening and how to support the legitimate aspirations of the citizens of many of those countries to democratic change.

Today, the legitimate demands of the peoples of the region for liberty, dignity and social justice continue to ring out loudly across the region. Recognizing that those demands are consistent with the basic principles and objectives of the Charter of the United Nations and with international human rights standards, the United Nations has been and will remain at the forefront of international efforts to defend our shared values and to support those legitimate changes, while respecting each country's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The issue of Palestine has been particularly central since the beginning of this session. We witnessed an historic development here in New York when the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, transmitted the Palestinians' application for membership in the United Nations to the Secretary-General on 23 September 2011. I had the honour to process, along with the Secretary-General, Palestine's first request to join in membership. Although it has not yet been possible to welcome Palestine as a new Member to our Organization during my mandate, I am still hopeful that this will happen in the near future. It is my conviction that the General Assembly should continue to work collectively for the attainment of a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

On Libya, the General Assembly made the historic decision to restore the rights of the new Libyan authorities both in the General Assembly and in the Human Rights Council. The Assembly played a key role in the admission and the adoption of the credential of the true representatives of the Libyan people. On 1 November 2011, I also made a joint visit to Libya with the Secretary-General to demonstrate that the United Nations supported the Libyans as they embarked on

that critical journey of reconciliation, reconstruction and democracy.

The General Assembly also expressed its concern regarding the ongoing crisis in Syria. In doing so, the General Assembly carried out its institutional responsibility related to international peace and security when there was a deadlock in the Security Council. In December 2011, the General Assembly adopted a resolution condemning the continued grave and systematic human rights violations committed by the Syrian authorities. In February, the General Assembly adopted resolution 66/253 A, which led to the appointment of the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, thereby implementing Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter. In August, the Assembly convened another timely meeting on Syria (see A/66/PV.124), at which Member States adopted resolution 66/253 B, aimed at bringing the crisis to an end. I also organized several formal and informal meetings of the General Assembly in order for Member States to be kept informed, to hear the views of the main United Nations actors and to express their national positions. I believe that the General Assembly has a crucial role to play in ensuring that the violence in Syria ends quickly.

Members will recall that at the start of the sixty-sixth session, I identified four key pillars around which I chose to focus the attention of the General Assembly. I am very pleased that key advancements have been made in each area. The first pillar was the peaceful settlement of disputes. It has been a very significant year for the role of mediation in the settlement of disputes. The Assembly has provided space for extensive deliberations and increased the momentum around mediation. Beginning with the general debate in September, many meetings, conferences and seminars were subsequently held throughout the year here at the United Nations and outside New York. These discussions led to the informal high-level meeting of the General Assembly in May.

I am pleased to see that concrete deliberations and actions have already taken place to materialize the ideas emerging from those discussions. The adoption of the follow-up resolution 66/291 on mediation just last week reflects the eagerness of the membership to actively pursue the issue. It is also encouraging that the next President, His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić, has proposed "The settlement of disputes by peaceful means" as the theme for the next general debate.

I have always believed that dialogue among civilizations offers a complementary approach to preventing and peacefully resolving conflicts. Therefore, during this session, we have placed a special focus on the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations. Its role could be critical, particularly in addressing disputes emanating from cultural or religious differences. I see more room in that respect for further elaboration. The Alliance should also be strengthened so that it can fulfil its noble mission more effectively. I will personally invest my time and efforts in supporting that vision in the future.

I wish at this juncture to take the opportunity to state that the sad and tragic events taking place around the Middle East over the past week have served as a stark reminder of the urgent need for us to cultivate and promote tolerance, mutual respect and dialogue among civilizations. We must respect each other's differences and uphold the right to freely practice one's religion. I deplore and condemn any act that amounts to the defamation of religions and incitement to hatred and xenophobia. Let us also recall that violence is never the answer, and I have strongly condemned the attacks against consulates and embassies, especially where diplomatic personnel and ordinary citizens have been killed or injured.

I implore citizens of the world to open their hearts and their minds and to celebrate the common values that bind us all in this one human family. Indeed, just this past week my presidency convened the first ever, day-long High-level Forum on the Culture of Peace. With the participation of a very wide array of actors, in particular from civil society, the event energized everybody with the determination to carry forward their work for the implementation of the Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace. Inspired by the spirited enthusiasm of all, I have proposed that this High-level Forum become an annual event, to be held every year on 13 September, the date on which the General Assembly adopted the United Nations Declaration and Programme of Action by consensus in 1999 (resolution 53/243).

The second pillar I identified in the sixty-sixth session was United Nations reform and revitalization. Recognizing that the United Nations must adapt to the global realities of the twenty-first century in order to fulfil its mandate, the United Nations membership has been occupied this session with revitalizing its General Assembly. I have worked throughout the year to support the endeavours of the two co-facilitators on General

Assembly revitalization, with the aim of fostering consensus among the general membership.

At this session, the ad hoc working group on General Assembly revitalization has discussed many important topics. A broad consensus has emerged from these discussions on the importance of General Assembly revitalization and the urgent need for a truly viable Assembly. Throughout the session, I have stressed the pressing need for a balanced approach in considering the issue, taking into account both the implementation of General Assembly resolutions, as well as other administrative initiatives aimed at enhancing its efficiency.

I would also note the increasingly active role of the President of the General Assembly and his Office, as noted in the recently adopted resolution 66/294 on General Assembly revitalization and the request of Member States that the Secretary-General submit, in the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015, proposals to review the budget allocation to the Office of the President of the General Assembly. This is most welcome.

I would like to emphasize that the General Assembly's role should never be perceived as a substitute for the mandate of the other principal organs of the United Nations.

Rather, the General Assembly offers a complementary, viable alternative for the international community to act in moments of deadlock. As I mentioned, that function has been put into practice during this session on the issue of Syria.

With respect to Security Council reform, I was very much aware of the need to strengthen confidence for that process. I therefore immediately reappointed Ambassador Zahir Tanin to chair the intergovernmental negotiations. My intention has always been to work towards a solution that garners the widest possible acceptance among the general membership.

I am pleased that, under my presidency, the eighth round of the intergovernmental negotiations took place. Spirits were high in that round of negotiations. Many Member States acknowledged new momentum and an increased level of candour, interaction and engagement. Now it is up to Member States to continue to build on the advances to date, and to act to crystallize the areas of convergence.

The third pillar I identified in this session was “Improving disaster prevention and response”. At the beginning of the session I expressed serious concern about the humanitarian crisis in the Horn of Africa. In December, I undertook a joint official visit to Somalia with the Secretary-General. We both felt that it was very important to visit that country in order to demonstrate that the United Nations and its membership continue to stand with Somalis on their path to a better future. As President of the General Assembly, I extended to the Government and people of Somalia my commitment to help ensure a better, safer and more prosperous tomorrow.

In April, we held the General Assembly’s informal thematic debate on disaster risk reduction. It was clear during that event that there was unprecedented international momentum to reduce disaster risk. Participants emphasized the importance of integrating disaster risk reduction into any future framework on sustainable development. I am pleased that the results of the thematic debate were useful for Member States in drafting the outcome document for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20).

Through our discussions, we also heard that addressing disaster risk requires the multifaceted engagement of all stakeholders, including the private sector and civil society. The integration of humanitarian and development approaches in order to strengthen local resilience and to mitigate the risk of disasters is also an essential part of a comprehensive disaster reduction framework.

Overall, it was clear that the international community needed to be better equipped to respond to both natural and man-made disasters. I would like to note here the relevance of the resolution on improving the effectiveness and coordination of military and civil defence assets for natural disaster response (resolution 65/307), which the Assembly adopted during the past session. I would encourage Member States to build on that concept.

My fourth and final pillar during my tenure was “Sustainable development and global prosperity”. This was of course a landmark year for sustainable development. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development will go down in history as the moment when the international community renewed its political will and commitment to tackling

the interconnected economic, social and environmental challenges we face.

The implementation of the Rio+20 outcome document will require the highest level of political commitment. I would stress the importance of putting in place effective means of implementation and technology transfer, as well as including the whole range of partners, civil society and the private sector in that process.

A defining element of Rio+20 was that it launched an intergovernmental process to define sustainable development goals after 2015. The role of the General Assembly is central in that exercise. As requested in the Rio outcome document, I have appointed Ambassador Ribeiro Viotti of Brazil to facilitate the process of establishing an open working group with a view to developing sustainable development goals. I once again express my hope that all members will support her in that important task and exercise flexibility and a spirit of compromise in the process.

In the field of global economics, our main focus has been to help strengthen the governance of the world economy. The empowerment of the General Assembly in economic matters was sought not for its own sake but because we deeply believe that the Assembly has a central role to play in global governance. Forging legitimate political consensus is what the General Assembly does best, and that is precisely what is needed today in global governance. At the high-level thematic debate on the state of the world economy, world leaders stressed that without our collective response and strong leadership, the world economy will continue to face serious challenges.

During this session, I have reminded the global community that if we are to rethink the traditional way we do development, it is also important to rethink and reshape some of our organizations and intergovernmental bodies. I co-organized a three-part seminar series on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review (QCPR) of operational activities for development of the United Nations system. The review is a timely exercise that offers a forward-looking reflection on the longer-term strategic repositioning of the United Nations development system within the development landscape. I would emphasize the importance of the draft resolution on the review that will be adopted this fall, which will directly impact the day-to-day work of the United Nations system and will shape the strategic

plans of the more than 30 entities that comprise the United Nations development system.

In addition to my four pillars, the Assembly of course tackled many other important topics. I would like to highlight here just a few more of the Assembly's achievements.

Disarmament and international security remained high on the General Assembly's agenda throughout the session. During my discussions with Member States, I called upon all to maintain a constructive and forward-looking approach, and to aim at consensus-building to the maximum extent possible.

I also expressed my concern about the current status of the disarmament machinery, including during my visit to address the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. Although Member States advanced their work throughout the session on almost the entire scope of issues on the agenda of the First Committee, greater efforts and flexibility from all involved are needed to advance the multilateral disarmament negotiations.

In the run-up to the 2015 Review Conference of Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the implementation of disarmament and non-proliferation commitments in accordance with the Treaty itself and in line with the plans of action adopted in 2010 will be crucial for the success of the Conference. In that context, equally important will be the realization of real progress at the Conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. I am aware that some serious groundwork has been done, and look forward to the successful convening of the Conference with the participation of all States of the region.

On peacekeeping, during my intensive exchanges with them, I expressed my gratitude to Member States for their dedication and perseverance in ensuring that the Organization succeeds in fulfilling its mandate. The importance that all Member States attach to issues related to peacekeeping cannot be underscored enough. That is because decisions on financing, on elaborating policies and guidelines and on reviewing implementation pertain to the authority of the General Assembly and its 193 Member States. That has been, and will be, essential to strengthening the legitimacy of the actions of the Assembly.

The safety and security of our peacekeepers has been on the Assembly's agenda on various occasions. The General Assembly and its Member States have to continue working closely with host countries, which bear the primary responsibility for the safety and security of peacekeeping personnel on their respective territories. I also stressed the importance of a strengthened global partnership among all stakeholders in peacekeeping operations, in particular host countries, troop contributors, regional organizations and United Nations staff. Member States must continue to build that partnership and maximize the use of national capacities, while providing rapid and effective international assistance.

The intergovernmental process on the reform of the human rights treaty bodies advanced during this session. The independence of treaty bodies in the protection and promotion of human rights should remain the cornerstone of that reform process.

On 24 September, the General Assembly will hold its first-ever high-level meeting on the rule of law. The meeting has generated great interest among Member States and civil society, indicating its importance in our societies and in international affairs. Preparations for the substantive outcome document and other necessary arrangements have been a priority this session, to ensure a productive and successful high-level meeting during the upcoming sixty-seventh session.

Under my presidency the General Assembly held a thematic debate in June on drugs and crime as a threat to development. The summary of the proceedings will be transmitted to the thirteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, scheduled to take place in Doha in 2015.

The third counter-terrorism plenary review in June (see A/66/PV.120) resulted in the adoption of the consensual resolution 66/282. The counter-terrorism seminar that I organized just before the plenary was a useful occasion for various stakeholders to interact on that major issue, which affects us all.

On health issues, in September 2011, we had the first-ever General Assembly high-level meeting on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases (NCDs). It was a landmark meeting, in which NCDs were given well-deserved priority on the global development agenda. A mandate was established and clear responsibilities were allocated. Work on implementation began this year, and throughout the

session I have encouraged Member States to consider broadening the definition of NCDs to include no less important diseases such as those affecting mental health.

On the crucial issue of the budget, during this session the Assembly adopted by consensus the programme budget for the biennium 2012-2013, totalling \$5.152 billion (resolution 66/263). It also approved by consensus the financing of the 16 peacekeeping United Nations missions, in the amount of \$7.234 billion (resolution 66/265). A number of important resolutions were adopted without a vote on critical issues relating to policy and administrative and financial matters for the effective functioning of the United Nations.

As President I convened a brainstorming meeting of the Fifth Committee, followed by a retreat, to initiate an informal discussion on the long-standing need for a review of the Fifth Committee's internal working methods. There was much convergence in the views of the Member States. The two events contributed positively to strengthening the relationship of mutual trust and good faith among all stakeholders. I believe that such discussions, both in an informal and formal setting, should be sustained in coming sessions, not only as a stocktaking but also as an important trust-building exercise, with a view to rationalizing and optimizing the deliberations of the Fifth Committee and bringing greater efficiency to the work of the Assembly. I wish the sixty-seventh session great success in considering the scale of assessments.

Allow me a word on our partners. At the outset of the session I affirmed my commitment to building a truly united global partnership. That means a partnership both inside and outside the United Nations. I believe strongly that civil society has an important role to play in achieving inclusive and sustainable development, peace and security and human rights, and in ensuring public support for the United Nations agenda. I was very pleased during this session to interact with many representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on most of our themes and debates. Representatives of civil society and the NGO community were highly instrumental in the success of the brilliant event we held here in the Hall in February to mark World Interfaith Harmony Week. Such representatives have always offered constructive and meaningful engagement. I made sure during this session to have an adequate opportunity for interaction with civil society. I would note, however, that the capacity of

the Office of the President to reach out to civil society should be strengthened, to ensure continuity and an adequate level of support to this increasingly important function.

I promised a successful session since the beginning of my tenure. With an outstanding team in my Cabinet, representing the diversity of the Assembly, we worked very hard, and I hope we met members' expectations. I wish to acknowledge, for the record, the invaluable support of my outstanding team and the tremendous roles played by two of Qatar's most talented diplomats, my Chief of Cabinet, Ambassador Mutlaq Al-Qahtani, and my Deputy Chief of Cabinet, Ambassador Tariq Al-Ansari. They are indeed great assets for their country and for the Organization.

I would also like to express my deep gratitude to the highly professional United Nations colleagues who have worked diligently, day in and day out, to make this session run smoothly and successfully. They have worked quietly and dutifully, many times behind the scenes, for the success of the Assembly and for the good of humankind. In particular, I thank the staff of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, who have worked tirelessly and earned my enduring appreciation. My special thanks go to the interpreters, security personnel and protocol staff for all their hard work. I am also especially grateful to the staff of the Department of Public Information for their valuable support. To every single person who has helped and supported us in this session, I say thank you.

I would also like to thank my dear friend, His Excellency Ambassador Sheikh Meshal Hamad M. J. Al-Thani, our representative to the United Nations, as well as the Permanent Mission of Qatar for their support.

We have worked as a team. The delegations and representatives of Member States have guided and supported me very much during this session of the General Assembly. It is my great honour to applaud them for all that we have achieved together during the sixty-sixth session.

In conclusion, as I look forward, I see the growing need for a universal and truly legitimate United Nations as being ever more paramount. For no other organization in the world maintains an all-encompassing, global mandate as does the United Nations. And no other organization has the potential and the responsibility to build peace and prosperity for all in the way that

the United Nations does. My deep belief is that the forum that the United Nations provides — a forum for dialogue among civilizations, for peace and for a universal voice — will continue to be the best way for the world. I am very confident that the United Nations will continue to offer humankind the best platform for a world of peace, security and prosperity for all. I look forward to a continuing engagement with members to cherish and realize that world. I thank all members so much for their support.

Agenda item 2 (*continued*)

Minute of silent prayer or meditation

The President: We are now coming to the end of the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly. I would

like to 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.

Closure of the sixty-sixth session

The President: Before proceeding further, I would like to invite to the podium the President-elect for the sixty-seventh session, His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić, to hand over the gavel to him.

I declare closed the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly.

The meeting rose at 4.30 p.m.