United Nations A/68/PV.109

General Assembly

Official Records

Sixty-eighth session

109th plenary meeting
Monday, 15 September 2014, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Ashe . . . . . (Antigua and Barbuda)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 7 (*continued*)

Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items

The President: I now invite the attention of the General Assembly to draft resolution A/68/L.62, circulated under sub-item (a) of agenda item 19, entitled "Implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development".

Members will recall that at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 20 September 2013, the General Assembly decided to allocate sub-item (a) of agenda item 19 to the Second Committee. To enable the General Assembly to take action expeditiously on the document, may I take it that the Assembly wishes to consider sub-item (a) of agenda item 19 directly in plenary meeting and to proceed immediately to its consideration?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 19 (continued)

Sustainable development

a) Implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

Draft resolution (A/68/L.62)

The President: The General Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/68/L.62, entitled "Four one-day structured dialogues on possible arrangements for a facilitation mechanism to promote the development, transfer and dissemination of clean and environmentally sound technologies".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/68/L.62?

Draft resolution A/68/L.62 was adopted (resolution 68/310).

The President: I shall now give the floor to delegations wishing to make statements.

I give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Poulsen (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its member States. The candidate countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

We would first like to thank our co-moderators, Ambassador Seger and Ambassador De Aguiar Patriota, for their tireless efforts in bringing forward the structured dialogues on possible arrangements for a facilitation mechanism to promote the development,

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transfer and dissemination of clean and environmentally sound technologies. We take note of the Secretary-General's report (A/68/310) on the structured dialogues, which, in its recommendations for the way forward, outlines three functions for a technology facilitation mechanism: mapping of existing technology facilitation mechanisms, frameworks and processes on clean and environmentally sound technologies through creation of an online knowledge-sharing platform; improved inter-agency coherence on technology facilitation through better coordination; and further promotion of technology needs assessment and capacity-building.

While we do not necessarily agree with all the details in the descriptions, we acknowledge that the three functions were indeed identified in the dialogues as important gaps, and there was a general sentiment among Member States that addressing them would promote the development, transfer and dissemination of clean and environmentally sound technologies. We therefore believe that the further elaboration of these functions must be at the core of our future technology discussions. Conversely, and while we remain open to considering further ideas and proposals, we believe that we should not devote additional time to discussing those elements on which it clearly appeared in the structured dialogues that no consensus is emerging.

Ms. Onishi (Japan): My delegation would first like to thank Mr. Seger, Permanent Representative of Switzerland, and Mr. De Aguiar Patriota, Deputy Permanent Representative of Brazil, and their team for their hard work both as co-moderators of the four one-day structured dialogues on possible arrangements for a facilitation mechanism to promote the development, transfer and dissemination of clean and environmentally sound technologies and as co-facilitators of resolution 68/310, just adopted.

Japan is one of the countries that have been keen to share their knowledge and technologies with the international community. We are very proud of our many contributions to the world in this area over the past several decades. We fully recognize that without technology it would be impossible to achieve any development in any country. However, we still believe that creating a new mechanism within the United Nations is not the best or most relevant solution for the development, transfer and dissemination of technologies.

Our main finding from the dialogue was the importance of creating an environment conducive to facilitating the engagement of the private sector, which is the primary developer and owner of technologies. Such an environment would include a sound regulatory and policy framework in recipient countries, including the protection of intellectual property rights, in order to encourage the private sector to continue and to increase its innovation of new technologies. On the basis of this fundamental idea, my delegation stands ready to continue discussion on how best to address this important topic in the General Assembly at its next session.

Mr. Mukerji (India): My delegation would like to join others in commending Ambassadors Seger of Switzerland and De Aguiar Patriota of Brazil for their exemplary role as co-facilitators for resolution 68/310, which we have adopted today.

We commend the General Assembly for adopting by consensus resolution 68/310, on structured dialogues on possible arrangements for a facilitation mechanism to promote the development, transfer and dissemination of clean and environmentally sound technologies. By adopting the resolution, the Assembly has provided a mandate for the continuation of meaningful discussions on the issue of technology cooperation and linked it with the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda. That is something that we welcome, not least because, in our view, the mandate of resolution 68/210 remains unfulfilled.

The resolution we have adopted today mandates the continuation of discussions based on the recommendations of the President of the General Assembly emanating from the four structured dialogues held during the sixty-eighth session. However, it is clear that both the summary presented by the moderators and the recommendations of the President of the General Assembly build on the discussions on the issue over the last two years. In fact, it is quite natural to consider the discussions so far on the issue as part of a continuum and an organic whole starting from the mandate given by the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), and including the two reports of the Secretary-General (A/67/348 and A/68/310), which unequivocally recommended the creation of such a mechanism, the discussions in the workshops during the sixty-seventh session and, of course, the four structured dialogues convened during the current session. As we seek to reach a conclusion on the issue during the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly, it will be our understanding that our discussions will

build on and base themselves on all those inputs and processes since Rio+20.

The Indian delegation has long maintained that without a collaborative approach on international cooperation on technology transfer and diffusion, the global achievement of sustainable development will remain a mirage. The global nature of the challenges that we confront makes it imperative that a public-goods approach to global resources is matched by an equally constructive approach to technology cooperation. As the international community embarks on a pathbreaking exercise to translate the normative discourse of ideas on sustainable development into actionable commitments through the sustainable development goals, it is all the more important that discussions on technology transfer and cooperation also move from long-winded debates into meaningful and action-oriented outcomes.

Mr. President, you can count on the Indian delegation's constructive and proactive engagement on the issue in the months ahead. We consider a meaningful outcome on technology cooperation in the form of the creation of a facilitation mechanism as an indispensable part of a successful negotiation on the post-2015 development agenda.

Mr. Percaya (Indonesia): I wish to take this opportunity to convey my delegation's highest appreciation to Ambassador Paul Seger, Permanent Representative of Switzerland, and Ambassador Guilherme de Aguiar Patriota, Deputy Permanent Representative of Brazil, for ably co-moderating the series of structured dialogues.

The outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (resolution 66/288, annex) acknowledged technology as one of the key means of sustainable development implementation, along with finance, capacity-building and trade. We are therefore pleased by the outcome of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (A/68/970), which affirmed technology as a vital component of means of implementation for sustainable development globally. Technology is a vital means for overcoming obstacles to economic expansion and growth, particularly for developing countries. Technology also serves to achieve specific development goals through a more sustainable development path.

Despite that necessity, developing countries are still facing major challenges in advancing the use of technology. I am glad that technology in the context of the sustainable development has received a dedicated discussion within the General Assembly. The four structured dialogues give us a good picture of the overall potential for building a technology facilitation mechanism. However, we have come to understand through the summary of the dialogues presented by the facilitators that more discussion is needed and that the moderators have recommended further discussions in the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly based on a number of elements and functions having to do with technology facilitation.

In that regard, Indonesia welcomes the recommendations as presented in resolution 68/310 and looks forward to seeing the process fulfil its objective of reaching a conclusion at the sixty-ninth session on a United Nations technology facilitation mechanism to promote the development, transfer and dissemination of clean and environmentally sound technologies in the context of the post-2015 development agenda. For that purpose, Indonesia stands ready to support the process in a constructive manner.

Mrs. Robl (United States of America): The four structured dialogues on possible arrangements for a facilitation mechanism to promote the development, transfer and dissemination of clean and environmentally sound technologies have reconfirmed the importance of technology to development solutions and generated ideas about possible next steps. My delegation sincerely thanks everyone who contributed to a productive discussion in those dialogues. At the same time, they also leave us, in our view, with significant work still to do.

In our view, it is critical to understand the issue as broader than the narrower question of technology transfer and to look at what drives and sustains technological advance innovation and application. That necessarily entails assessing the institutional conditions that promote innovation, technology adaptation and diffusion and the human capital requirements for deepening of knowledge and expertise. It requires looking at diverse solution-oriented forms of international development cooperation. It thus also involves questions of investment, entrepreneurship, capacity-building, science, technology, engineering and mathematics education, especially for women, and enabling policy and regulatory environments, particularly around intellectual property. The work that has been done on technology transfer can be a basis for what, in our view, is still needed, namely, a

more substantial, independent, analytical exercise in due diligence and a much better understanding and fuller range of views from the private sector, which we believe is both a key source and supporter of innovation, research and commercialization of new technology.

The United States also believes that in addition to preparing for the absorption and adoption of new technologies, receiving countries must implement strong legal regimes to help protect innovations. That includes creating rules that stimulate competition, entrepreneurship, commerce and investment, and a robust and well-enforced intellectual property regime. Without that kind of intellectual property protection, many innovators would be unwilling to transfer or share their new technologies.

On the issue of linking the discussion of technology transfer to the post-2015 development agenda, it is important to clarify that what the Open Working Group sent forward (A/68/970) was not a consensus document but a working proposal that reflects differing views, including in relation to technology, which was minimally discussed in the Group. We therefore remain committed to working with all colleagues toward formulating the post-2015 development agenda in the context of our financing for development discussions and in the context of any follow-on to those dialogues, in order to ensure the holding of substantive and productive discussions that can help us chart a path forward.

Ms. Carayanides (Australia): I thank the Permanent Representatives of Brazil and Switzerland for their work as co-Chairs on this issue. Australia remains committed to continuing discussions on technology transfer and facilitation under resolution 68/310, just adopted.

We note the mandate for continuing discussions is focused on environmentally sound technologies, and while we recognize the post-2015 context, our view is that those discussions do not encompass technology facilitation writ large. We also view that intellectual property is not a barrier or a constraint to technology transfer or facilitation. Rather, it is critical to the development of new and innovative technologies. The creation of domestic environments conducive to investment and innovation is the best method to boost countries' technological capacity, and the use by States of international norms and standards and intellectual property regulations will continue to encourage investment and develop local capacities and technology. We therefore look forward to finding ways to help all States connect with existing technologies during discussions at the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

The President: We have heard the last speaker on this item. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to conclude its consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 19?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 29 (*continued*)

Report of the Security Council

The President: Members will recall that the Assembly considered agenda item 29, jointly with agenda item 123, entitled "Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters", at its 46th to 49th and 56th plenary meetings, held on 7, 8 and 21 November 2013, respectively.

May I take it that the General Assembly takes note of the report of the Security Council contained in document A/68/2?

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 29?

It was so decided.

Agenda items 14 and 118 (*continued*)

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

The President: I should like to draw the attention of members to the need for an early agreement on the agreed text of the draft resolution on the organization of the United Nations Summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda as soon as possible at the sixty-ninth session. It is my hope that the document will be finalized promptly in order for the Assembly to move forward with the necessary preparatory work for the Summit. In this regard, I will be forwarding the current version of the text to the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session for further

consideration and issuance as an "L" document of the sixty-ninth session.

At this stage, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Ambassador Petersen of Denmark and Ambassador Aisi of Papua New Guinea, the co-facilitators of the informal consultations on this process, for their dedicated work in guiding the consultations during the current session.

The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda items 14 and 118.

Agenda item 38

The situation in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan

The President: Members will recall that, at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 20 September 2013, the Assembly decided to include this item in the agenda of the sixty-eighth session. It is my understanding that it would be desirable to defer consideration of this item to the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to defer consideration of this item and to include it in the draft agenda of its sixty-ninth session?

It was so decided.

The President: May I also take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 38?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 39

Question of the Comorian island of Mayotte

The President: Members will recall that at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 20 September 2013, the General Assembly decided to include this item in its agenda on the understanding that there would be no consideration of this item by the Assembly until further notice.

In connection with the item, I have received a note verbale dated 15 May 2014 from the Permanent Mission of the Comoros to the United Nations requesting the inclusion of this item in the provisional agenda of the sixty-ninth session.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to include the item entitled "Question of the Comorian island of Mayotte" in the draft agenda of the sixty-ninth 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 39?

It was so decided.

Agenda items 42 to 47

Question of Cyprus

Armed aggression against the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Question of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas)

The situation of democracy and human rights in Haiti

Armed Israeli aggression against the Iraqi nuclear installations and its grave consequences for the established international system concerning the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and international peace and security

Consequences of the Iraqi occupation of and aggression against Kuwait

The President: Members will recall that, at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 20 September 2013, the Assembly decided to include items 42 to 47 in the agenda of the sixty-eighth session, in accordance with paragraph 4(b) of the annex to its resolution 58/316, of 1 July 2004.

In resolution 58/316, the General Assembly decided that these items shall remain on the agenda for consideration upon notification by a Member State.

Accordingly, these items have been included in the draft agenda of the sixty-ninth session.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda items 42 to 47?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 7 (*continued*)

Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items

The President: Before proceeding further, I should like to inform members about the status of the consideration of the draft resolution entitled "Outcome

document: the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples".

It is my understanding that Member States would wish to have more time to consider this item. In this regard, I will be forwarding the text to the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session for further consideration and action by the Assembly at the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples.

Agenda item 85 (*continued*)

The rule of law at the national and international levels

Report of the Secretary-General (A/68/213/Add.1)

The President: Members will recall that at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 20 September 2013, the General Assembly decided to allocate agenda item 85 to the Sixth Committee.

To enable the General Assembly to consider the item expeditiously, may I take it that the Assembly wishes to consider agenda item 85 directly in plenary meeting and proceed immediately to its consideration?

It was so decided.

The President: The report of the Secretary-General entitled "Strengthening and coordinating United Nations rule of law activities" (A/68/213), which was submitted in accordance with resolution 67/1 of 24 September 2012, and issued in July 2014, was not considered by the Assembly during its current session.

In this connection, I received a letter dated 9 September 2014 from the Permanent Representatives of Denmark and Mexico to the United Nations requesting that the document be considered by the Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. May I take it that the Assembly decides to consider the addendum to the report of the Secretary-General on strengthening and coordinating United Nations rule of law activities, circulated in document A/68/213/Add.1, at its sixty-ninth session under the item entitled "The rule of law at the national and international levels"?

It was so decided.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 85.

Agenda item 128

International Criminal Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Genocide and Other Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of Rwanda and Rwandan Citizens Responsible for Genocide and Other Such Violations Committed in the Territory of Neighbouring States between 1 January and 31 December 1994

The President: Members will recall that, at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 20 September 2013, the Assembly decided to include this item in the agenda of the sixty-eighth session.

It is my understanding that it would be desirable to defer consideration of this item to the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to defer consideration of agenda item 128 and to include it in the draft agenda of its sixty-ninth session?

It was so decided.

The President: May I also take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 128?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 129 (*continued*)

International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991

The President: Members will recall that, at its 53rd plenary meeting, on 18 November 2013, the Assembly elected Mr. Koffi Afande of Togo as a member of the International Tribunal for a term of office beginning on 18 November and ending on 31 December 2013.

Members will also recall that under agenda item 129, the Assembly adopted decision 68/416 at its 72nd plenary meeting, on 23 December 2013.

It is my understanding that it would be desirable to include agenda item 129 in the draft agenda of the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to include agenda item 129 in the draft agenda of its sixty-ninth session?

It was so decided.

The President: May I also take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 129?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 149

Financing of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad

The President: Members will recall that, at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 20 September 2013, the Assembly decided to include this item in the agenda of the sixty-eighth session.

It is my understanding that it would be desirable to defer consideration of this item to the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to defer consideration of agenda item 149 and to include it in the draft agenda of its sixty-ninth session?

It was so decided.

The President: May I also take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 149?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 153

Financing of the United Nations Mission in East Timor

The President: Members will recall that, at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 20 September 2013, the Assembly decided to include this item in the agenda of the sixty-eighth session.

It is my understanding that it would be desirable to defer consideration of this item to the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to defer consideration of agenda item 153 and to include it in the draft agenda of the sixty-ninth session?

It was so decided.

The President: May I also take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 153?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 175

Investigation into the conditions and circumstances resulting in the tragic death of Dag Hammarskjöld and of the members of the party accompanying him

The President: Members will recall that, at its 75th plenary meeting, on 7 March 2014, the Assembly decided to include this item on the agenda of its sixty-eighth session.

In connection with this item, I have received a letter dated 11 September 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations. The Permanent Representative of Sweden has requested that consideration of this item be deferred to the sixty-ninth session of the Assembly. May I take it that the Assembly decides to defer consideration of the item and to include in the draft agenda of the sixty-ninth session the item entitled "Investigation into the conditions and circumstances resulting in the tragic death of Dag Hammarskjöld and of the members of the party accompanying him"?

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 175?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 64 (*continued*)

Report of the Human Rights Council

The President: Members will recall that the Assembly considered this agenda item at its 52nd plenary meeting, on 13 November 2013. Members will also recall that, under agenda item 64, the Assembly adopted resolution 68/144 at its 70th plenary meeting, on 18 December 2013. By that resolution, the Assembly decided, inter alia, to conclude its consideration of Human Rights Council resolution 24/24 before the end of its sixty-eighth session. In that connection, I have received a request to defer consideration of Human Rights Council resolution 24/24 to the sixty-ninth session.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to defer consideration of Human Rights Council resolution 24/24 to the sixty-ninth session.

It was so decided.

The President: May I take it that the Assembly decides to conclude its consideration of Human Rights Council resolution 24/24?

It was so decided.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 64.

It was so decided.

The President: I shall now give the floor to those delegations that wish to make statements.

Mr. Townley (United States of America): We wish to return briefly to agenda item 64 and the decision taken moments ago to defer its consideration to the sixty-ninth session. We simply want to state for the record our concern that the agenda item had been closed and was not reopened by the Assembly before it was addressed, and that we were not recognized on a point of order prior to that decision. Our views on the substantive issue are well known, and we believe that further consultations on that important issue should have been held prior to today's decision.

The President: I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Ms. Kaljulate (European Union): Regarding the decision just made concerning agenda item 64, we would also like to put on record our understanding that there were no discussions on that decision, and we would also like to note that our position on the issue is well known.

Agenda items remaining for consideration during the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly

The President: I should like to remind delegations that the following agenda items, which have been considered at previous meetings, remain open for consideration during the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly: items 9, 10, 14 to 16, 18, 19, 19 (b), 19 (h), 21, 21 (d), 22 (b), 23, 30, 33 (b), 35, 36, 63, 70, 70 (a) to (d), 85, 111, 112, 114, 114 (b), 115, 115 (a), 116, 116 (h), 118, 121, 124, 125, 131 to 135, 137 to 148, 150 to 152, 154 to 165 and 176.

As members are aware, those items have been included in the provisional agenda of the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly with the exception of sub-item (b) of agenda item 33, entitled "Strengthening the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution"; sub-item (d) of agenda item 70, entitled "Strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster"; agenda item 133, entitled "Programme budget for the biennium 2012-2013"; and agenda item 134, entitled "Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015".

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to include agenda items 9, 10, 14 to 16, 18, 19, 19 (b), 19 (h), 21, 21 (d), 22 (b), 23, 30, 35, 36, 63, 70, 70 (a) to (c), 85, 111, 112, 114, 114 (b), 115, 115 (a), 116, 116 (h), 118, 121, 124, 125, 131, 132, 135, 137 to 148, 150 to 152, 154 to 165 and 176 in the draft agenda of the sixty-ninth 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 items 9, 10, 14 to 16, 18, 19, 19 (b), 19 (h), 21, 21 (d), 22 (b), 23, 30, 33 (b), 35, 36, 63, 70, 70 (a) to (d), 85, 111, 112, 114, 114 (b), 115, 115 (a), 116, 116 (h), 118, 121, 124, 125, 131 to 135, 137 to 148, 150 to 152, 154 to 165 and 176 at the present session?

It was so decided.

The President: I now give the floor to the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General: I am pleased to join everyone here as we mark the closing of the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly, and to be doing so in this beautifully, elegantly renovated General Assembly Hall. I am grateful to all those who have worked tirelessly for this, as well as to Member States for their patience and endurance in supporting and waiting for the reopening of the Assembly. We will have a formal opening on 24 September. Until then, I would just like to make a personal observation about the President of the General Assembly.

Mr. President, I think you should have the privilege of presiding for at least one day in this beautifully renovated Hall. You have often told me that you have regretted being the only President of the General Assembly in the history of the United Nations who has not been able to sit in the proper presidential chair. So you are presiding in this Hall for the first and last time. You are leaving an important legacy as far as your presidency is concerned, and I thank you for your patience.

We are wrapping up a vital year of work and progress. I commend the President of the General Assembly, Ambassador John Ashe, for his leadership, and would like to express my deep admiration for his vision and commitment. Throughout his presidency, he has led by example, doing his utmost to ensure that the work of the General Assembly proceeded in a highly effective, efficient and timely manner. He is surely one of the most punctual Presidents of the Assembly in United Nations history — and I would again like to thank you very much, Sir, for leading by example.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the Vice-Presidents, the Committee Chairs and all those who have been so instrumental in the successful work of the Assembly during such challenging times. This has been an eventful year. We started with a full agenda and consequential tasks — helping to lay the foundations for success in 2015 with the Millennium Development Goals, the post-2015 development agenda and a meaningful new agreement on climate by the end of next year. We also faced many global crises that left the Security Council paralysed, and on which the General Assembly rose to act.

Mr. President, through it all, you demonstrated wise leadership in steering our global discussions towards constructive solutions. You came to the United Nations from a small island with a big capacity for working with other countries. You used your training as an engineer to build consensus. You also brought a longstanding commitment to sustainable development that you translated into results. Your leadership as co-Chair of the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development laid a foundation for our deliberations on sustainable development goals.

When the world lost one of its most inspiring leaders, President Nelson Mandela, the General Assembly came together to celebrate his life at a special meeting (see A/68/PV.61). Thanks to the efforts and initiative of the President and the Assembly, the United Nations will always honour and remember Madiba through the United Nations Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela Prize.

Through your leadership, Sir, the General Assembly reached out to the world at large, even bringing questions sent through social media into thematic debates and high-level events. Above all, I believe this session of the General Assembly has truly set the stage for the success of the post-2015 development agenda, including through a number of important thematic debates and valuable high-level events. Member States and civil society came together over the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals and the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing. And progress was fostered through dialogues on a technology facilitation mechanism and the accountability framework.

I applaud all of that action. It will have a positive effect on our collective long-term future, as will your efforts, Sir, to revitalize the work of the General Assembly in order to enhance its responsiveness and better accommodate the needs and demands of Member States. Once again, I thank all those here for their work during this sixty-eighth session. I look forward to the leadership of the incoming President, His Excellency Mr. Sam Kutesa, in carrying this work forward over the next year.

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

I would now like to make a closing statement, and, as can be imagined, I will do it from the rostrum for the first and only time.

We are now at the close of the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly, and this is the last time I will have the singular honour of addressing the Assembly as its President. As I look out across the Hall, I am indeed honoured to see so many friends and colleagues with whom I have toiled in this very Hall — well, not this brand-new one, but we get the picture — in a collaborative effort aimed at addressing global challenges. Those here who know me very well know that I like to keep it short, and here is where I would like to say goodbye and good luck — and that is my farewell speech.

On second thoughts, permit me to share just a few more words with the Assembly as I prepare to hand over to my very able successor, the former Foreign Minister of Uganda, His Excellency Mr. Sam Kutesa, President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session.

Today is a far cry from that day in June of 2013 when I took — and I counted them — 33 steps from my country's seat to the rostrum to accept the Assembly's acclamation as its President at its sixty-eighth session. As the Secretary-General just said, we are sitting in a renovated Hall, and on that day the Hall in which I accepted that acclamation did not look anything like this. But at the end of the day, the work we did together was neither temporary nor makeshift in any way. We took some decisions that I hope will be lasting. Let

me thank the folks from the Capital Master Plan for giving me the opportunity to stand here before the Assembly — in fact, to put it bluntly, they saved my bacon. Timing in life, as they say, is indeed everything.

I recall that many here — who are still my friends — used to remind me throughout the session that I might very well go down in history as the first President of the General Assembly never to have occupied this rostrum. To them, my friends, I say that they were wrong. I am here in live and living colour on the very last day of my presidency. I could not have got here without their help. That is why, despite the slings and arrows that they have thrown my way, they are still my friends.

However, the question remains — and it is valid — what have I done with the opportunity that Member States have provided? Let me try and answer that question.

On that day in June 2013, I asked Member States to join me in a quest, that is, to turn their attention from the preoccupation at that time with peace and security to another pillar of the United Nations, namely, development (A/67/PV.87). To be more specific, I asked them to join me in setting the stage for the post-2015 development agenda. Have I succeeded? Only they can answer that question. As we look back over the sixty-eighth session, Member States will recall that, on that date, I told them that I would convene six thematic debates and high-level events and that I would give them the opportunity to tell everyone, including themselves, what they would like to see in the emerging post-2015 development agenda. Member States took me on blind faith. For that, I profusely thank them. We were able to have a full discussion with all stakeholders, including civil society. For the very first time, they were able to feel as though they were part of a journey that the international community was about to commence.

We could turn to the normal metrics that one uses to judge success, that is, numbers. I could tell Member States that, during the sixty-eighth session, the Assemby adopted a total of 300 resolutions and some 80 decisions. However, numbers never really tell the whole story. We know that, in the United Nations context, the whole story is not ever "whole" or a "story". The world is far more complex than that. Let us look beneath the numbers.

We have an opportunity in crafting the post-2015 development agenda to develop something in a collective way that is going to be participatory and inclusive and has as its overarching objective the eradication of extreme poverty. That is no small undertaking and will require a collective effort. It will require Member States to act front and centre in an intergovernmental forum, such as this body.

However, the international community cannot, as Rio+20 adequately showed, do that alone. It needs partners, which it will find in civil society and the private sector. It must meet an accommodation because whatever it ultimately agrees on, the international community will need those partners to help it to implement that agenda if we are ultimately to be successful in that quest. That will require a sea change and a departure from the norm and the way in which we normally do business. We are at the threshold of crafting a new development paradigm. That is going to require a departure from the norm.

Member States will have to make the commitment but they will need partners to help them take whatever they commit to forward, since the sustainable development agenda that they are considering is vastly different from the one that was originally envisaged back in 1992. Tremendous challenges and, indeed, opportunities lie ahead. That is going to require, literally, every shoulder to the wheel.

Within that, the international community will have to pay keen attention to the most vulnerable groups. On the social side, that will certainly include women and young people. For far too long, women have been treated as second-class citizens. Today and henceforth, we hope that that is no longer the case because if, indeed, they compose 50 per cent of the world's population and gave birth to the other half, we can no longer ignore them. They must be full partners going forward.

If this is about the future, we have to include young people, not by just simply telling them that we are planning for them. They have to be involved in the planning because this, ultimately, will be about them. They will inherit the Earth. They must therefore be an integral part of the international community's work as it seeks to craft the new agenda.

Member States achieved a number of other things during the sixty-eighth session. For example, they successfully completed the fourth Biennial Review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and saw the launch of the first-ever United Nations web portal for victims of terrorism.

In social, humanitarian and cultural matters, we also saw a number of important achievements. There was the high-level Declaration that was the product of the High-level Dialogue on Migration and Development (resolution 68/4). There was a renewal of political commitment by our leaders to wrestle against the major health, social and economic threats posed by non-communicable diseases (resolution 68/300) and the subsequent call for strengthened multisectoral approaches for their prevention and control. We achieved consensus in the negotiations on strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system, bringing to a satisfactory closure two years of protracted consultations.

As we have just heard from the Secretary-General, Member States agreed to establish the Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela Prize in tribute to the extraordinary life and legacy of one of the greatest statesmen and humanitarians whom the world will ever see. That prize will serve not only as a tangible reminder of his service to humankind, but also as a potent inspiration to all who work tirelessly to improve human well-being and bravely confront human hatred, repression and violence.

We also witnessed the unveiling of the winning design for the permanent memorial to and remembrance of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. With the Assembly proclaiming 2015-2024 as the International Decade for People of African Descent, which is expected to be launched immediately after the general debate of the sixty-ninth session, the descendants of the estimated 20 million Africans who were sold into slavery can now look to the United Nations for a reshaping of the narrative and consequences of that event and discover how new and constructive approaches can be used.

One of my objectives during the sixty-eighth session was to make progress on revitalizing and reforming this institution of ours, and I am pleased that we were able to achieve some progress in that area with the adoption of an ambitious new resolution on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly (resolution 68/307), the inauguration of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, the adoption of a resolution on reforming and strengthening the Economic and Social Council (resolution 68/1), and the adoption of a mobility framework for United Nations staff (resolution 68/265). We now have new institutions that are intended to make the United Nations more relevant, responsive and effective.

The path to reform is one we must still continue to tread, and never more so than on the thorny issue of Security Council reform. While it would be foolhardy to estimate the challenges inherent in getting to a round of real negotiations on Security Council reform, that must be a course of action we should never shy away from. For if we are to attain an organization that is truly representative and fully reflective of its membership of the present day, as opposed to that of decades past, we must, sooner rather than later, seek to make it so. In that regard, I hope that the membership will endeavour to build on the somewhat modest momentum achieved during this session and capitalize on the opportunities that the next and/or future sessions may offer.

I have frequently observed that a man — or woman — may be from an island, but never is an island. And in an increasingly interconnected world, no man or woman who is engaged in a collective enterprise can truly say that he or she walks alone. I would therefore like to thank the Vice-Presidents of the Assembly at its sixty-eighth session who have assisted me in the work of the session, and the various Chairs and co-Chairs who have taken up important issues and kept our agenda forward-looking and on schedule. Time is money. And I would like to thank the many facilitators and co-facilitators who have also assisted in this endeavour.

But I would be somewhat remiss if I did not take a moment to praise our Secretary-General, who has steadfastly continued to lead the Organization with skill, dedication and self-deprecating humour; with diminishing resources and an agenda that expands exponentially, all against a backdrop of a world that is fraught with daily crises and seemingly intractable problems. I thank him and his entire Executive Office for all the support they have given me and my team from day one. I would also like to acknowledge the support I have received from virtually all of the Secretariat, in particular the Department of Management, the Department for Economic and Social Affairs and the Department of Public Information. But through it all, one, the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management and its Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Gettu, has been steadfast in its support to the Office of the President of the General Assembly. Whatever successes we have achieved they have been an integral part of.

To my own dream team — the men and women of the Office of the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session, whose professionalism, hard work and dedication have made possible whatever we have achieved during the session — to each and every one of them, I simply say thanks.

Now as I take my leave, I have no greater hope than that our work may empower today's young girls and boys to pursue their dreams and make the difference they want to see in the world, a world that is finally gender neutral. Each of us has a part to play in making that a reality. As I say farewell and pass the torch to my successor, I would like to wish him and his team much success in the sixty-ninth session. I have had my moment, and I would like to thank everyone here for making it memorable.

Agenda item 2 (*continued*)

Minute of silent prayer or meditation

The President: We will now observe a moment of silent prayer or meditation. I invite representatives to stand for a minute.

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

Closure of the sixty-eighth session

The President: Before closing the session, I would like to invite to the rostrum the President-elect of the Assembly at its sixty-ninth session, Mr. Sam Kutesa, to hand over the gavel to him.

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

The meeting rose at 4.15 p.m.