

**AD HOC WORKING GROUP ON THE
REVITALIZATION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
(A/RES/59/313)**

STATEMENT

BY

**MR. STEFAN BARRIGA
FIRST SECRETARY (LEGAL ADVISER)
PERMANENT MISSION
OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. President

During the last years, Liechtenstein has very actively supported the work on the revitalization of the General Assembly. This engagement stems from the conviction that the General Assembly is indeed, as was stated by our leaders at the World Summit 2005, the “chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations”. The effort and progress we have made over the last decade in achieving this goal has been gradual, incremental and sometimes too slow. Nevertheless, with the adoption of resolution 59/313 the General Assembly took a step in the right direction. We thus welcome the continuation of this work in the context of the Ad Hoc Working Group established in accordance with resolution 59/313. We are under no illusions as to the feasibility of radical reform steps. It is all the more important that we continue making small steps with the necessary tenacity.

Mr. President,

I thank the Co-Chairs of the Working Group for their recent letter inviting delegations to assist them in identifying ways to further enhance the role, authority, effectiveness and efficiency of the General Assembly. In response to that I will shortly touch upon a number of key areas of substance. At the outset, however, I would like to stress that this Working Group should only enter into its substantive work once it disposes of a clear overview of the current status of implementation of previous revitalization measures. In the last few years, the General Assembly has adopted a number of substantive resolutions on this issue containing a large number of measures. It would greatly assist our work if the Secretariat could prepare an overview of these measures and their implementation status. Even a rather short and informal paper, including a complete list of measures decided and brief comments regarding their implementation could be helpful in this respect.

The result of our work should be tangible and make a real difference in the way the General Assembly fulfills its mandate. We have seen much repetition and many statements of good will in our past consultations on this issue. Admittedly, reforming the way this organ works is a complex undertaking, due to the universal character of the General Assembly, which is at the same time its greatest advantage. We have full confidence in your commitment to a stronger General Assembly - the most obvious way of giving the Assembly more relevance are of course effective decisions in follow-up to the Summit, and you have already accomplished a lot in this respect.

Mr. President,

Turning to substance, I would like to highlight a few issues which my delegation considers particularly important.

Relationship to other main organs: Even without the benefit of a report on the implementation of past revitalization measures, it is clear that there is much room for improving the role and authority of the General Assembly. We are not interested in an antagonistic relationship between the GA and the Security Council in particular. Certainly, the Council is increasingly taking on functions that to our mind should be dealt with by the Assembly. This development is of concern to us in particular when it comes to legislative functions. Also, there is a general erosion of the understanding in which the Charter was drafted. There is a growing perception that the Security Council deals with important matters and the General Assembly with all other issues. This, of course, endangers the institutional balance of the organization and jeopardizes its legitimacy. However, we must not simply decry the ever more encompassing embrace of the Security Council. We need concrete initiatives which make the General Assembly a more relevant body in accordance with the provisions of the Charter. In this spirit, we have co-authored with the grouping now known as the “S-5” a resolution on the working methods of the Security Council. This text is based on the competences given to the General Assembly under article 10 and proposes to establish a dialogue between the two most important

organs of this organization on a topic of mutual and ever more important concern. We are encouraged by the overall response this text has received and will further pursue our initiative. Another extremely valuable initiative is the proposal submitted by Canada to re-shape the process of appointing the Secretary-General – or in fact to establish a recognizable process in the first place. We very much look forward to discussing the important ideas contained in the Canadian proposal.

Role of the President of the General Assembly: The strengthening of the role of the President of the General Assembly was one of the most important elements of past resolutions on revitalization. We would welcome further steps in this area, and an even more pro-active role for the President in the steering of debates and the conduct of our work.

Agenda, resolutions, documentation: With respect to one of the main problems the General Assembly faces today we have until now only been able to agree to cosmetic changes: the sheer number of agenda items, resolutions and reports which have become routine and have little to no effect in the real world. The Working Group should explore ways of dealing with these issues in a more efficient way and should not shy away from drastic proposals. Not all resolutions need a report by the Secretary-General, and not all reports need to be in written form. It should be the prerogative of the President of the General Assembly and of the Chairpersons of the Main Committees to engage in a dialogue with the initiators and sponsors of agenda items and resolutions with a view to ensuring coherence of the General Assembly's work. The new structure of the Assembly's agenda is a welcome improvement, but the system still lacks consistency and logic. The number of agenda items is way too large because the individual agenda items are too specific. We would therefore strongly suggest that an attempt be made at designing a truly generic agenda which does not change with every session, but which reflects the areas of work of the Assembly and mainly serves as a point of reference. This would be without prejudice to the right of Member States to submit initiatives and resolutions

under those existing agenda items, but it would dispense with the bureaucratic procedure necessary for the inclusion of additional items.

Election modalities: Resolution 59/313 envisages the use of optical scanners as a means of expediting election procedures. We hope that the Secretariat will soon be in a position to give Member States an update on possible options in this matter.

Revitalization measures in main Committees: In the past, our efforts aimed at revitalizing the General Assembly have had very uneven results in the main Committees. Considering that by far most of the decisions of the General Assembly are prepared in the Committees, we must put more emphasis on reform at Committee level, and either give comprehensive guidance to the Committees on all aspects of revitalization, or request the Committees to do so themselves, with clear deadlines and a clear list of issues which the Committees should address. Alternatively, this Working Group could itself consider setting up sub-groups dealing with revitalization measures in the respective Committees; thereby respecting the individual needs of the Committees, but profiting from the lessons learned and the momentum of this process.

I thank you.