

**ITEM 121:**  
**REVITALIZATION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**STATEMENT**

**BY**

**H.E. AMBASSADOR CHRISTIAN WENAWESER,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE  
OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**NEW YORK, 26 NOVEMBER 2007**

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. President

The topic under consideration today must be a priority issue for any President of the General Assembly. Strengthening the body over which you preside is both an obvious goal and a political necessity. There is no doubt that this Assembly has, for a while now, not been playing the role foreseen for it under the UN Charter. This is a worrisome development because a one-sided focus on the work of the Security Council is politically unhealthy and a threat to the institutional balance of the organization.

We continue to see limited value in the now almost traditional exercise of negotiating some sort of resolution on how to revitalize the General Assembly. The recent past in particular has made it quite clear that these efforts may produce some small political sparks and can also result in the consensual adoption of decisions and resolutions. They do not, however, bring about real political change. This is in fact not surprising: Why would a paradigm shift be created through an exercise that is, by and large, an expression of business-as-usual and thus of the political culture it is intended to change? Furthermore, the Ad-hoc Committees or Working Groups mandated with the work on revitalization tend to produce texts of uncanny resemblance and simply lead to a repetition of the well known statement that the problem of the work on revitalizing the General Assembly is implementation and, more concretely, lack thereof.

One key lesson from the past is the importance of leadership. The General Assembly has been a politically more relevant body when headed by somebody who was willing to lead its activities and to give real guidance to the membership, on the basis of prior consultations. Given the importance of the position of President of the General Assembly, it is quite remarkable that we do not pay more attention to the process of nominating and selecting our Presidents. It is clear that not all of your predecessors knew this organization as well as you do, Mr. President. In some instances an elected President was quite surprised to find out what this position entails, after taking over at the helm of the Assembly. The Presidency of the General

Assembly is not a protocol function, it is a position of leadership and political responsibility. We would therefore welcome consultations, under your guidance, on how to improve the mechanisms through which the Assembly nominates and appoints its Presidents. There are a number of proposals from the past that you can build on, relating to measures such as informal meetings with persons who have an interest in the position, compilation of briefing material etc. that you can draw upon. If a concrete product on this issue was to be the only outcome under this item, we would consider this a good result.

In addition, of course, we wish to see a dynamic session of the Assembly under your leadership. We encourage you in particular to focus on the priority issues that you have outlined and to make frequent use of the format of informal plenary sessions. Such meetings might be even more useful and yield more concrete results if you present the members with a list of topics and questions that you wish them to address in connection with a particular issue. We also welcome briefings offered by the Secretary-General, such as the one given last week. We concur that such briefings should be held on specific opportunities, but do not believe that such opportunities arise exclusively in connection with travel activities. Also, we would welcome briefings that are more focused and limited to a small number of topics, perhaps even a single one. We further encourage you to organize similar opportunities with other high officials of the Secretariat, such as USG's. Under-Secretaries General in particular often complain about the lack of opportunities to engage with the membership, and informal plenary meetings are one obvious remedy.

I thank you.