



# AUSTRALIA



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**UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY 59<sup>th</sup> Session**  
Monday, 4 October 2004

## **Item 52: Revitalisation of the General Assembly** **Item 54: Strengthening of the United Nations**

**Statement by H.E. Mr John Dauth LVO**  
**Ambassador and Permanent Representative**  
**of Australia to the United Nations**

**on behalf of Canada, New Zealand & Australia**

(Check against delivery)

Mr President,

Deputy Secretary-General,

It is my privilege to speak on behalf of Canada, New Zealand and Australia in this joint debate on item 52, Revitalisation of the work of the General Assembly, and item 54, Strengthening of the United Nations System.

Mr President,

The efforts of your predecessor, H.E. Julian Hunte, helped impart new energy into the process of revitalising the General Assembly, which had produced little in recent years. Two resolutions emerged, containing a few useful steps and some valuable principles. But we will need to advance the process again during the 59<sup>th</sup> session (and beyond) if we are indeed to revitalise the General Assembly.

As our delegations have said many times before, the fundamental cause of the malaise in the Assembly is an over-loaded, outdated, repetitive and often irrelevant agenda.

The decision in our last resolution to arrange the agenda according to the priorities of the Medium-Term Plan is promising, and can help us to streamline our work in a manner that

will make the Assembly a more effective and relevant body in the interests of all member states. The Main Committees should be rigorous and bold in the task of making recommendations for rationalising items before 30 April 2005. They should clear away the detritus of years past and create space to address the contemporary challenges facing us all.

This year we must also act to stem the vast flow of documents. There seems to be wide agreement that the UN produces far too many documents – at the behest of member states – and that many of them are never read. But we have not yet acted. The idea that the President and Main Committee Chairs would consolidate reporting requests at the end of each session is worth trying. And, each of the Main Committees should curtail the quantity of documents they request. They could look at this in conjunction with their review of the agenda. A similar exercise is needed in ECOSOC and its subsidiaries.

Finally, we must use the General Committee to manage more rigorously and effectively the work of the Assembly. Australia and New Zealand are members of the Committee this session and we look forward to assisting in this task.

Mr President,

Canada, New Zealand and Australia appreciate the work of the Secretary-General and his Panel on UN-Civil Society Relations for their work on expanding and deepening the relationship between the United Nations and civil society.

As civil society organisations have grown in their scope and responsibilities at the global and local levels they have become ever more important actors, possessing expertise, enthusiasm and networks across the global agenda. Participation by NGOs in inter-governmental processes can lead to better decisions, better outreach and more effective implementation. And collaboration with NGOs on the ground is essential for achieving our collective goals in development, humanitarian assistance and peace and security.

We therefore agree wholeheartedly with the Secretary-General that the United Nations and its major organs will benefit from interacting more extensively with civil society. And it is timely to consider how the Organisation can best do so, rather than to continue on an ad hoc basis.

We look forward to discussing the proposals contained in the report in more detail at a subsequent time and would appreciate your advice, Mr President, on how we will proceed. For now, I simply wish to comment on four of the proposals before us:

First, the Secretary-General's proposal to allow NGOs to participate in the work of the General Assembly could be another step on the path of revitalisation. Without detracting from the fundamental, inter-governmental character of the Assembly, a greater dialogue with NGOs in formal and informal settings would be of value. We would, of course, need to define carefully the rights and responsibilities that we extend to NGOs.

Second, the proposal for a single accreditation process, with a greater Secretariat role in screening applications for inter-governmental review, would be a sensible and welcome reform. Rather than maintaining different standards for NGO participation in each inter-

governmental body, a single system would be simpler and more efficient. If the General Assembly were to assume responsibility for conducting this process then the General Committee would be the appropriate body to exercise the necessary functions.

Third, we note the recommendations for strengthening links between the UN and national parliaments, but, like the EU, are not convinced that the methods proposed are the most appropriate for engaging with parliaments. A mechanism already exists in the form of the relationship between the UN and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, and we believe it would be more appropriate to work within existing arrangements wherever possible, rather than establishing new mechanisms and processes.

Fourth, the enlargement of the Partnerships Office appears to be a good institutional initiative to extend relations with NGOs and we look forward to considering the details of the proposal in the 2006-07 budget.

Mr President,

Strengthening the United Nations is, of course, a process that has many aspects. And it is worth recalling here the importance of continuing progress towards making the Secretariat more effective, efficient and results-oriented.

The modest refinements to the budget process agreed last year were much less than we thought were necessary, but we are pleased to see that they have helped the Secretariat to prepare a more focused work plan for 2006-07 and that some duplication has been eliminated. However, we were disappointed – if not surprised – that the Committee on Programme and Co-ordination failed to reform itself and remains of negligible value. We need to keep working on this.

Results-based budgeting – an innovation from the Secretary-General's first round of reforms – continues to progress and is producing a greater focus on results and performance. Two steps are needed to take this further. First, a system of cost-accounting will allow the Organisation to tie results to resources and to determine how limited resources will be best utilised. Second, improved evaluation and performance reporting needs to provide a stronger framework for accountability, improving results and better planning.

Finally, continued reform of human resources policies and practices is vital for strengthening the Organisation and we need to consolidate and extend the reforms introduced a few years ago. The work of the International Civil Service Commission on reviewing pay and conditions, strengthening performance, and improving the management capabilities of managers is critical to the task of ensuring the Organisation can meet the challenges facing it.

In that regard, we welcome the report of the panel on the strengthening of the international civil service and look forward to building on its recommendations to improve the contribution of the International Civil Service Commission to the UN system.

Thankyou