



## Press Conference

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### **Press Conference by General Assembly President Vuk Jeremić**

Elaborating a harmonized post-2015 sustainable development agenda and developing a consultative mechanism between the General Assembly and global economic institutions would top that body's priorities during its sixty-seventh annual session, said its President during a Headquarters press conference today.

"The next 12 months are not going to be remembered as the easiest in mankind," said Vuk Jeremić, during his first press conference as General Assembly President, describing what he saw as a time of serious geopolitical volatility and uncertainty. However, he stressed that he would work hard to ensure that the sixty-seventh session "goes down in history as a session of peace", and that several key priorities would be at the heart of its work for the next year.

First among its priorities would be to follow up on the significant momentum that existed in the wake of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development ("Rio+20"), held in Brazil in June. Moreover, the creation of a series of sustainable development goals for the post-2015 era — following the deadline for the present global targets, the Millennium Development Goals — was the primary task "given to us by the world leaders in Rio", he stressed.

In the next few months, a group of some 30 countries would be established to work towards articulating the sustainable development goals, he said, stressing that the work of the group must be integrated with that of a high-level panel — led by President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono of Indonesia, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia and Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom — which had been charged with devising a list of post-2015 goals. "The effort of the group of 30 and the high-level panel need to be somehow combined," he said, adding that their efforts should not be separate "let alone diverging".

Mr. Jeremić also sought to give the Assembly a more prominent role in global economic governance. In particular, he said there should be a consultative mechanism between the Assembly and the "Group of Twenty" (G20) Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors, a grouping of 19 countries and the European Union which focused on matters of the international financial system. A mechanism connecting that group with "the rest of the world" must be put in place to enable all countries to put forward their views on global economic issues. Indeed, such a mechanism would allow "all voices to be heard" and the G20, itself, to better answer questions about its legitimacy. The General Assembly must be at the heart of such a mechanism, he said, adding that that would be one way of revitalizing it and giving it more weight in the international system.

As President, he would work on the important goal of enhancing the cooperation between the Assembly and the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, he said. At the heart of a strengthened relationship with the Alliance — which he said was one the United Nations' main tools of preventive diplomacy — was the spreading of the culture of tolerance and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

Yet another aim of the Assembly this session was to strengthen the role of outside actors in its negotiations. With some exceptions, the Assembly had not yet found a way to truly draw upon the critical work of civil society, including global institutes and think tanks. He would work hard to help integrate those entities into Assembly debates and other negotiations.

Briefly describing the main themes that had emerged during the Assembly's annual general debate, he said that the successful dialogue had proven, once again, that the United Nations remained at the centre of the harmonization of foreign relations. A meeting on the rule of law represented the first

time that the issue was discussed thematically at the highest level. The consensus outcome document that had emerged from that meeting had emphasized the importance of respecting the fundamental tenets of international law, he added, including the principles of sovereign equality as the “backbone of multilateralism”.

During the debate, States had issued strong condemnations of terrorism and of recent “blasphemous insults”, as well as of the violence that had ensued from them. There was also resounding support for a two-State solution in the Middle East, with many calling for the resumption of negotiations, as well as support for democratic changes taking place across the region. “Well formulated concerns” for Syria’s deteriorating human rights situation abounded, he said, and the “common denominator” in that discussion was wide support for the work of the Special Adviser on Syria, Lakhdar Brahimi. Among other issues raised by a number of States were the revitalization of the General Assembly, reform of the Security Council and improvement of the human rights treaty body system.

Responding to several questions from correspondents — including one who wondered more specifically about a “way forward” in Syria — Mr. Jeremić said that that question had been at the heart of nearly every one of his recent bilateral meetings. “Every day, 100, 200, 300 people are dying in Syria,” he responded, adding that the international community had been able to do very little to end the violence so far. The issue had to remain very high on the agenda; indeed, there was a need to find a way to work together to end the “horrible bloodshed”. It was not for him, as President of the Assembly, to take sides, but the body should work to strengthen a global appeal for the violence to come to an end.

Asked why the reform of the Security Council was not listed as a priority of his presidency, he said “we’re trying to be very pragmatic and realistic about what can be accomplished in the next 12 months.” “The General Assembly stands by the Security Council” and was ready to facilitate the discussion of reform as best as possible, he said. He personally believed that such reform was needed; however, “we need to adhere to the rules of the only system we have.” The Assembly, on its own, could not make a decision on that matter, he added.

Asked whether he could “streamline” the “enormous number of overlapping resolutions” before the Assembly in an effort to better address his priorities, he said that part of the Assembly’s revitalization was to make it less “blocked and paralyzed”, while still dealing with the myriad of issues before it.

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