

**Informal Thematic Debate of the General Assembly on
“The United Nations in Global Governance”
(New York, 28 June 2011)**

Informal Summary by the Secretariat

Overview

1. The informal thematic debate of the General Assembly on “The United Nations in Global Governance” was chaired and moderated by H.E. Mr. Joseph Deiss, President of the 65th session of General Assembly. It commenced with opening remarks by Ambassador Deiss and the United Nations Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon, followed by keynote speeches by H.E. Mr. Danilo Turk, President of the Republic of Slovenia, and M-10.71(r)-9(y)5.4(DP)-830

annual Presidencies might impair the coherence necessary to implement a long-term strategic vision. In that context, the speaker emphasized that the rapprochement between the General Assembly and the G20 was encouraging and should continue. Other issues that needed to be discussed included strengthening the role of ECOSOC and improving the coordination of mandates of UN specialized agencies and programmes.

6. With respect to the role of the UN in 2025 and beyond, the President of the General Assembly pointed out the importance of having a more inclusive and representative system that gave proper role to non-governmental actors, civil society and the private sector. The UN needed to adapt to changing circumstances with flexibility and innovation, learning from the lessons of the last six decades. At the same time, he argued that global responses for the common good would sometimes require concessions in terms of sovereignty and national interests, stressing the important long-term gains that could accrue from short-term sacrifices.

Opening remarks by H. E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations

7. The Secretary-General highlighted the major transformation that the world economy had experienced in the last twenty years. He pointed out that although interconnectedness between economies had increased and brought prosperity to many developing countries, not all countries had enjoyed its benefits. The global economic governance structures inherited from over 60 years ago had not yet adapted to these new circumstances. Reforms had been undertaken in some institutions, but key decision-making bodies still had a long way to go to properly reflect the growing importance of developing economies and emerging markets in the global economy.

8. The Secretary-General stated that the emergence of the G20 reflected this changing environment. The complementarities between the UN and the G20 were clear and both entities needed to continue to work in a mutually supportive fashion to contribute to shared development objectives, including the MDGs. He also highlighted that every multilateral institution and association had a role to play in global economic governance and that a division of labour could make best use of the comparative advantages of the respective organizations.

9. The Secretary-General stressed that, in order to address the pressing issues on the agenda, the multilateral system needed to be revamped into an inclusive, transparent and effective system, with an efficient, accountable and coherent UN at its centre. Given its legitimacy, the UN had a fundamental role to play in ensuring that the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable were taken into account in all decision-making processes. To strengthen its capabilities to do this, he mentioned that the aim of ECOSOC reform would be to make it a more dynamic, inclusive, relevant and operational body both in development and global economic governance.

Keynote speech by H. E. Mr Danilo Turk, President of the Republic of Slovenia

10. H. E. Mr. Danilo Turk emphasized the pressing need to strengthen the system of global governance in the face of a range of complex and interrelated challenges, including

address other global challenges. The speaker also pointed to the paradox between the need for coordinated responses and the divergent interests and incentives, which served to both justify and impair global governance.

11. The speaker highlighted the difference between governance at national and global levels. At the global level, he argued that, in the quest for better governance, there was no alternative to collective action by nation states. Effective results could be produced through political will and a sense of common purpose. While common threats might generate collective action, maintaining such cooperation in the long term remained a difficult challenge.

12. According to the speaker, in order to play a central role in global governance, the UN needed to adjust and reform internally, as well as to develop effective partnerships with other stakeholders. He called for a more representative, yet effective, Security Council and argued that, among other things, the General Assembly should be focused on specific priorities and on enhancing cooperation with the other main UN bodies. ECOSOC on the other hand should be recalibrated and might serve as the interface between the UN and the G20. Finally, he argued that the Human Rights Council needed to be reinforced and should expend more effort in dealing with challenges to human rights resulting directly from the lack of economic and social development.

Keynote speech by Mr. Pascal Lamy, Director-General of WTO

13. Mr. Pascal Lamy pointed out that globalization entailed benefits as well as costs and risks. According to him, there were in principle two ways of addressing the challenges posed by it. One option would be to reverse the process of globalization. This, however, was neither possible nor desirable. Reversing globalization was not possible since it had to a significant degree been driven by advances in technology that could not be turned back. It was not desirable since this would mean giving up the manifold benefits provided by globalization.

Panel discussion I: “Economic global governance: from rapid response to medium and long-term planning”

Summary of the presentations by the panellists

16. **Ms. Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul** stated that the global economic crisis, and inter-related threats such as the spike in food prices, endangered the attainment of the MDGs. It was therefore important for developed countries to fulfil their obligations and commitments pertaining to development assistance. Moreover, she raised the spectre of additional complications arising from the growing inequalities generated by the crisis. These could hinder growth prospects and, given the resulting social and political tensions within countries, also make it harder for nation states to come to agreement on economic policies at the international level.

17. The speaker argued that the UN had an important role to play in shaping processes that generate agreements at the global level. However, the various existing UN processes pertaining to developmental issues had not been well-integrated or sequenced. She also called for consideration to be given to the proposal for an International Panel of Experts tasked with the assessment and monitoring of both short-term and long-term systemic risks in the global economy¹

21. The panellist also stressed the importance of addressing governance issues pertaining to specialized agencies. He particularly emphasized the need to reform voice and participation in the Bretton Woods institutions and the selection of their respective heads. With respect to the UN, the speaker expressed the need for greater coherence and the importance of reforming ECOSOC.

Summary of the interactive discussion

22. Salient features of the interactive discussion included the points summarized below:

Participants emphasised a need for comprehensive reform of international economic and financial system to better promote development, and better respond to and prevent crises. In that regard, some mentioned the need for international organizations, including the Bretton Woods institutions, to strengthen their development orientation and increase resources for development.

A number of speakers stressed that the universal membership and unquestioned legitimacy of the UN made it well-positioned for taking a central role in global economic governance and development. In this regard, many delegations underscored that a strengthened United Nations framework for enhancing coordination and complementarity should be at centre of efforts to improve global economic governance.

Many speakers pointed out the importance of the UN in harnessing and coordinating international responses to existing and future threats and challenges. At the same time, some reiterated that the UN needed to be equipped with the necessary resources and capabilities to effectively and quickly address global challenges.

Participants referred to the need to improve the effectiveness of the UN. In particular, they pointed out that the proliferation of parallel processes and repetitive resolutions needed to be contained. They also called for an appropriate follow-up mechanism to be established within the UN to bridge the gap between policy making and commitments on issues related to global economic governance. More broadly, some speakers referred to the need to enhance the UN central role in areas of its competence, including development, human rights and security.

Number of delegations underscored the importance of reforming ECOSOC. Some

governance should be seen in conjunction with global social governance and global environmental governance.

Moreover, the speaker also stressed the importance of the UN as a forum for global and regional political dialogue. As an example, he felt that its unique legitimacy and neutral standing could provide an important political platform for deliberations aimed to facilitate collaboration among the new political stakeholders emerging in the Arab world.

24. The speaker nevertheless emphasized the urgent need for reform of relevant intergovernmental bodies. In the economic and social sphere, ECOSOC needed to respond to current changes in a more timely and effective manner. In the area of peace and security, the UN should increase the transparency of the work of the Security Council and include non-permanent members as well as non-members more extensively in its consultations.

25. According to the panellist, transparency and inclusiveness were fundamental to legitimacy. In this connection, it was a welcome development that the G8 was effectively replaced by the more inclusive G20. However, the participation of African countries in the G20 should be increased. He argued that greater legitimacy would enhance the capacity of the G20 to serve as a consensus-building forum that was complementary to the formal global intergovernmental structures of the UN system. At the same time, he pointed out that the G20 might also need to consider discussing political issues in addition to having dialogue on global financial and economic challenges.

26. **Dr. Ramesh Thakur** underscored that global governance had to respond to a wide number, range and complexity of issues in an increasingly intertwined but also fragmented world. The world had changed enormously since the creation of the UN. Security challenges

civil society and the private sector. He also referred to a number of conditions for having a more effective multilateralism. An important starting point was that UN Member States should apply a truly global perspective in their deliberations and decision-making. ‘Zero-sum thinking’ was inadequate since human survival, dignity and decency depended on a sense of shared responsibility that would recognize the importance of collective action for common public needs.

30. The speaker also stressed that effective multilateralism would require institutional development. He pointed out that the increasing number of institutions, actors, and stakeholders had led to a form of “messy multilateralism” that needed to make way for a more principled form of multilateralism. In this connection, he felt it was important that the G20 should not be seen as a threat but a complement to the UN since it could serve as a valuable consensus-building forum. At the Secretariat level, he underscored that reform initiatives should focus on enhancing and strengthening the “Delivering as One” initiative and reinvigorating the work of UN staff. At the intergovernmental level, the speaker referred to the need for more coordination among representatives of each Member State in different multilateral organizations. At the same time, he argued that decisions should not always require consensus. Resolutions should be fully implemented and adhered to even when they were based on a majority decision. He also argued that the General Assembly should refrain

countries while they had not opened an investigation in any country outside the African continent.

Summary of the interactive discussion

35. Salient features of the interactive discussion included the points summarized below:

Participants reaffirmed the central role of the United Nations within the global governance framework. Its legitimacy, convening power, expertise and field presence were seen as indispensable in addressing fundamental challenges related to international peace and security, development, human rights and environment.

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Some speakers emphasized the important role that regional and sub-regional institutions could play in complementing the global governance structure. Those institutions were seen as having the ability to better address specific regional needs and demands and serve as a middle-way intermediary between global and national policy-making.

Closing Remarks by the President of the General Assembly

36. The President of the General Assembly, H.E. Mr. Joseph Deiss, concluded the debate on “The United Nations in Global Governance” by highlighting a number of points raised during the meeting.

37. These points included: the broad consensus among delegates on the need to improve the current system of global governance and to reaffirm the central role of the United Nations; the tension between the global nature of challenges and the sovereignty of states to design and implement policies that hampered the existing governance framework; the importance, in the context of the reform of the global governance system, of striking a balance between the central elements of leadership, legitimacy and efficiency; and the need for global governance to go beyond crisis management and also to be capable of addressing medium- and long-term issues, such as economic development and climate change.

38. The President of the General Assembly also highlighted the importance of ECOSOC in terms of economic, social and environmental governance and also as a bridge between the United Nations and informal processes like the G20. At the same time, he underscored the views expressed during the debate that ECOSOC urgently needed to reform its structure and procedures. The President concluded that the thematic debate had made a contribution towards advancing the discussion on the role of the United Nations in global governance and expressed his thanks to all the speakers, panellists and participants.