



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

22 December 2005

Excellency,

As 2005 draws to a close, I am writing to review our progress in implementing the decisions of our leaders at the World Summit, and to look forward to the next steps we will need to take together in the New Year.

As I write, intense discussions on the 2006/07 budget are underway. I know that work is going on to bring them to a satisfactory conclusion by tomorrow. It is crucial and critical for the UN that we now reach a decision on the budget.

First, I want to look back briefly at 2005 as a whole which has, by any measure, been an exceptional year.

The year will be remembered as a year of catastrophic natural disasters, from the aftermath of the Asian tsunami to the hurricanes in the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico, the flooding and mudslides in Central America and the South Asian earthquake. I know we all stand united behind those affected and those involved in relief and reconstruction.

2005 has been a year of progress on several fronts, not least on development. Welcome new commitments were made on aid and debt and some progress was made on trade just a few days ago in Hong Kong. Needless to say, there is much more to be done. A major focus in 2006 must be to ensure that our commitments to development are implemented.

The United Nations has been subject to much serious scrutiny and criticism over the past year. This has to be fully and properly considered. In fact, in a world of much insecurity and mistrust, many multilateral institutions have come under attack. Yet, the nature of today's global challenges is such that we need effective multilateralism more than ever.

All Permanent Representatives and
Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York

2005 was also a year of opportunity. The 2005 World Summit Outcome showed that the members of the United Nations are prepared to reform to meet the challenges of today's world. It paved the way for us to take important actions which could lead to greater security, greater dignity, and a substantial reduction in poverty for many of our peoples. For all of us in the General Assembly, these tasks have been – and will continue to be – a great opportunity and a great responsibility.

In reviewing progress in the major areas of Summit follow-up, I should begin by highlighting three areas where we have already reached important agreements, and one where an agreement in our informal consultations is expected to come to the plenary for adoption tomorrow.

Peacebuilding Commission

I am greatly encouraged that, on 20 December, the General Assembly reached agreement on the Peacebuilding Commission. I commend the Co-Chairs, Ambassador Løj of Denmark and Ambassador Mahiga of Tanzania, for conducting our informal consultations with such commitment and efficiency. I applaud each one of you for your courage and vision in bringing about this historic achievement. To those who argue that the United Nations, and the General Assembly in particular, is not able to take important but difficult decisions, I hold up the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission as an example of what we can do together.

The fact that a number of you were prepared to set aside some deeply held differences of view in order to see the resolution adopted this week shows that this Assembly is willing and able to come together when the time for decisions is here.

This week's decision was just a beginning. The Commission must quickly become operational and turn into a living reality in the field. We should now select or elect the members of the Organizational Committee without delay. I will revert to you shortly with the arrangements for further action in this regard within the General Assembly.

Central Emergency Response Fund

We have fulfilled the mandate by our leaders to improve the timeliness and predictability of humanitarian funding, as called for in the Summit Outcome document. On 15 December, the existing CERF was transformed to the Central Emergency Response Fund and a sizeable grant element was added to the revolving fund. By this decision, we have taken action to ensure a more rapid, effective and equitable international response to today's humanitarian crises.

Safety and security of personnel

A major step to strengthen the legal framework of protection of staff and associated personnel was taken by the General Assembly on 8 December when the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel was adopted. The scope of legal protection will now also include United Nations operations conducted for the purpose of delivering humanitarian, political and development assistance in peacebuilding, and for delivering emergency humanitarian assistance.

I strongly encourage all Member States to sign and ratify the Optional Protocol, as it opens for signature in January next year. I also encourage Member States who have yet to sign and ratify the above-mentioned Convention to do so at the earliest opportunity.

HIV/AIDS

The consultations on HIV/AIDS concluded their work last week with informal agreement on a draft resolution. I am grateful to Ambassador Hackett of Barbados and Ambassador Laohaphan of Thailand for their skilled co-chairing of the process, and to Member States for reaching consensus on some sensitive issues. The draft resolution, which is expected to be brought before the plenary for adoption tomorrow, paves the way for a comprehensive review of progress of the 2001 Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and a high-level meeting in May/June 2006. This meeting is intended to keep international attention focused on all aspects of the fight against HIV/AIDS. As soon as a resolution is adopted, I would strongly encourage high-level representation at the meeting from as many Member States as possible.

Looking forward to 2006, there are further important areas of follow-up where our work is already underway and must continue.

Human Rights Council

I thank my two Co-Chairs, Ambassador Arias of Panama and Ambassador Kumalo of South Africa, for having diligently conducted eighteen informal consultations of the plenary. They were also at my side during the meeting with representatives of the Commission on Human Rights on 23 November. I am encouraged by the thorough and substantive work accomplished to date. The consultations to date have allowed us to identify the issues on which we need to find an agreement.

It is now time for us to bring this work to closure, and I hope that you will be able to involve yourself personally in our efforts to do so. Informal consultations have been scheduled for 11 and 13 January. As I have stated before, the earlier we have a decision establishing the Council, the earlier we can start working on the necessary transitional arrangements with the present Human Rights Commission.

Development and ECOSOC reform

I said in my 30 September letter that it was imperative to keep development high on the agenda of the General Assembly during this Session. I am pleased to note that the General Assembly has now adopted resolutions on follow-up processes in 2006 on migration and development and in 2008/09 on Financing for Development. It will be vital that we all give these processes high priority. Separately, I am sure all Member States were pleased to see the UN Convention Against Corruption enter into force on 14 December, thus following up another element of the World Summit Outcome.

Meanwhile, the informal consultations on development follow-up and ECOSOC reform – ably co-chaired by Ambassador Verbeke of Belgium and Ambassador Diarra of Mali – have been characterised by practical, constructive discussions. There is a shared determination to create a more

effective ECOSOC and ensure prompt and thorough follow-up to the Summit Outcome on development, including the Millennium Development Goals and the other internationally agreed development goals that emerged from the major UN conferences and summits.

In order to promote further implementation as soon as possible, and to enable ECOSOC to put the reforms in place in 2006, we should bring these negotiations to a conclusion at the beginning of the New Year. In this regard, the Co-Chairs advise me that the next informal consultations, at which elements of draft resolutions will be considered, will be held on 13 and 16 January (this is a change from the dates announced at the end of the last consultation).

Secretariat and Management reform

There have been five informal consultations on Secretariat and Management Reform, ably co-chaired by Ambassador Akram of Pakistan and Ambassador Rock of Canada. There was early agreement to consider issues in two categories: items for early action and items requiring more time.

In the first category, discussions were held regarding the establishment of an ethics office, the conducting of an independent external evaluation of the auditing and oversight system of the United Nations and the proposals on an independent oversight advisory committee. These issues are now part of the final budget negotiations.

Regarding the second category of items, on which reports will be forthcoming from the Secretariat in the spring of 2006, the consultations benefitted from briefings by the Deputy Secretary-General and other Secretariat officials. These briefings covered ongoing work to enhance effective management, provide an assessment to the General Assembly on budgetary, financial and human resources policies, regulations and rules, and prepare for the review of mandates older than five years. The discussions on mandate review gave an opportunity for Member States to give the Secretariat guidance and direction on this work.

The informal consultations will reconvene in the New Year, with the intention of concluding work in June.

Security Council Reform

As mandated by the Outcome Document, my letter of 19 December reviewed the progress to date of efforts to reform the Security Council, both in terms of making it more broadly representative, efficient and transparent and of adaptation of its working methods.

I noted the continued strong interest among Member States in Security Council reform, and the widely held view that reform of the Security Council is an essential element of the overall reform effort. I indicated my availability for consultations with Member States considering initiatives on Security Council reform as well as with other Member States, and announced my intention to convene the Open-ended Working Group in the New Year.

I encourage you to engage in constructive dialogue on the important issue of Security Council reform. I am fully committed to pursuing the goal of Security Council reform as agreed at the 2005 World Summit. In my continued work, I shall primarily be guided by ideas and contributions from Member States on the best way towards a reform of the Security Council which is equitable and effective and meets with broadest possible agreement.

Counter-terrorism

I am grateful to the members of the Sixth Committee and its Chair, Ambassador Yáñez-Barnuevo of Spain, as well as Ambassador Perera of Sri Lanka, Chairman of the Working Group on terrorism, for the solid work they have done to date. The Sixth Committee Chair and I will continue to consult Member States to discuss relevant issues including the comprehensive convention, a counter-terrorism strategy and a high-level conference.

I would urge Member States to use the time before the resumption of the Ad Hoc Committee in February 2006 to make every effort to find a formula to overcome the remaining difficulty in the negotiation on the convention.

I am writing separately to the Secretary-General requesting him to provide proposals on capacity building referred to in paragraph 88 of the Outcome Document, as well as other inputs of relevance for the work of the General Assembly on a counter-terrorism strategy. The contributions from the Secretary-General in this regard would be a useful basis for the informal

consultations I intend to hold in the New Year, and on which I hope we will all be able to focus our energy.

Lastly, there are areas of Summit follow-up where our work will need to begin when we return in the New Year.

System-wide coherence

On 1 December I circulated a letter from the Secretary-General regarding the study the General Assembly asked him to undertake on United Nations system-wide coherence in the areas of humanitarian assistance, the environment and development. In my accompanying letter, I indicated the importance of giving Member States an opportunity to contribute their perspectives to the panel being established at an early stage in its work. I intend to provide such an opportunity as soon as possible in the New Year.

Environment

In my letter of 3 November, I noted that the Outcome Document mandated us to look at the institutional framework for the UN's environment work, and signalled my intention to set up informal consultations in this regard in the New Year. Since then, I have asked the Secretariat to produce a factual background paper to help inform our forthcoming consultations. I will write again in January regarding the appointment of two Co-Chairs, and envisage that they would be able to hold their first consultations within a few weeks of their appointment.

General Assembly revitalization

My letter of 31 October set out my proposals on revitalization. I have subsequently appointed Ambassador Silkalna of Latvia and Ambassador Alsaïdi of Yemen to co-chair the ad hoc working group mandated to identify ways to further enhance the role, authority, effectiveness, and efficiency of the General Assembly. I am grateful for all the advice, ideas and support that Member States are giving to the Co-Chairs as they prepare to move this important issue forward in the New Year.

I will revert to some other aspects of Summit follow-up such as Charter amendments and Human Security in the New Year.

I know that all of you and your staff have had to work very intensely as we moved from the busy agenda of the 59th session to the World Summit negotiations, and immediately thereafter to the task of implementation, alongside our regular programme of work. I am immensely grateful to all of you for the energy you have invested in our work, and for your willingness to work through the open, transparent and inclusive mechanisms we have put in place. I know you will all want to join me in thanking those who have played leading roles in our work since the Summit.

I trust that we will all have an opportunity to recharge our batteries over the coming weeks, and look forward to welcoming you back in January to continue our work with renewed vigour and determination. To aid your planning, I will be keeping the calendar of informal consultations updated at <http://www.un.org/ga/president/60/summitfollowup/schedule.pdf>.

Finally, I should note that as 2005 winds up, we come to the end of the year which marked the centenary of Dag Hammarskjöld's birth. I believe his words in 1960 are as pertinent now as they were then. He said:

‘We have too much in common, too great a sharing of interests and too much that we might lose together, for ourselves and succeeding generations, ever to weaken in our efforts to turn simple human values into the firm foundation on which we may live together in peace’.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jan Eliasson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jan Eliasson