Statement by H.E. Hiroshi Minami

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At the Joint Debate of the 69th Session of the General Assembly


And Agenda Item 118: Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly

Tuesday, 18 November 2014

(Check Against Delivery)
Mr. President,

At the outset, I would like to thank you, H.E. Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa, for your initiative on the Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly. I would also like to extend my sincere gratitude to Co-Chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group during the previous session, H.E. Mr. František Ružička, Permanent Representative of Slovakia and H.E. Mr. Norachit Sinhaseni, Permanent Representative of Thailand, and welcome the appointment of H.E. Mr. Vladimir Drobnjak, Permanent Representative of Croatia and H.E. Mr. Wilfried I. Emvula, Permanent Representative of Namibia, as the new Co-Chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group during the current session.

Mr. President,

Both in your acceptance speech this June and in your speech at the opening of the 69th session of the General Assembly in September, you emphasized the importance of revitalizing the General Assembly. Japan completely shares your views. Revitalizing the General Assembly, together with Security Council Reform, are crucial components of the reform agenda. We must make steady progress towards achieving feasible and realistic results on this item.

In this context, Japan welcomes the adoption of General Assembly Resolution 68/307 last session. In particular, the decision to move the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council's election date to an earlier one is being highly considered. We believe it will definitely resolve the legitimate concerns of newly-elected members. It is also an achievement that the resolution, "decides to reiterate the interim arrangement … recommending the pattern for the rotation of the Chairs of the Main Committees … from the sixty-ninth to seventy-third sessions."

Mr. President,

It is true that in previous sessions we made some achievements regarding the Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly; however, much more has to be done and much more effort is needed.

Enhancing fairness in the management of this United Nations body remains an important aspect for discussion. We argued last year during this same occasion that the speakers list during the High-level week should more closely reflect reality. Countries like mine, in which the Head of State plays a ceremonial role and the Head of Government has the
highest political mandate, should be dealt with as such. It is appreciated that this year’s General Assembly has reflected on our argument to some extent.

We would also like to stress the importance of strict adherence to time restraints for each speaker. In this regard, it is highly appreciated that President Kutesa starts each meeting on time. The General Assembly needs to continue discussions to achieve disciplined management.

Rationalization of the General Assembly’s work is an urgent challenge. As the amount of tasks in the GA has increased, agenda prioritization has been indispensable. Through sorting more than 170 GA agendas, as well as biennialization and triennialization of agendas which have currently been discussed every year, the work of the GA should be rationalized; however, the process still has a long way to go. For instance, late-night sessions have become more common in some main committees of the GA. We hope such situations should be improved upon immediately.

The President’s strong initiative in hosting the High-level Meetings next year is appreciated. In order to make these meetings even more high profile, I would like to suggest they be more distinct from similar international conferences, so senior representatives from each capital can attend.

Mr. President,

The importance of exercising the leadership of the President of the General Assembly should also be noted. Considering UN budget restraints, Member States should support the activities of the President as much as possible.

These are some ideas Japan believes are worth discussing under this agenda item. The Revitalization of the General Assembly is, together with the reform of the Security Council, an imminent task that we have to address. Let me finalize my statement by saying that Japan stands ready to contribute in a constructive way to the discussions aimed at further enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of the UN.

I thank you, Mr. President.