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**UNITED
NATIONS**

MEETINGS COVERAGE

General Assembly President Calls for Unity as Member States Negotiate 'Powerful Outcome Document' for Upcoming Conference on World Economic Crisis

Sixty-third General Assembly

Plenary

82nd Meeting (AM)

Plenary Adopts Resolution Endorsing Recommendations, Conclusions in Report of Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations

"Let us be united in our efforts to negotiate a powerful outcome document," General Assembly President Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann said this morning as he appealed for Member States' support and involvement in the few short weeks before the 1-3 June Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and its Impact on Development.

The upcoming event was an opportunity of which the world could not afford not to take advantage, he said, adding that the Summit of world leaders would be both timely and historic. It had been organized in record time, reflecting the need for a timely response to the financial and economic crisis that continued to unfold around the world. The decision to hold a conference at the highest level had committed the international community to initiating a "global conversation" on the crisis, mitigating its impact on developing countries and addressing reform of the international economic and financial architecture.

Having met under the chairmanship of Nobel Laureate Joseph Stiglitz, 20 experienced economists and central bankers from all regions -- members of the Commission of Experts on Reforms of the International Monetary and Financial System established by the President of the General Assembly -- had presented their recommendations in a three-day interactive thematic dialogue at the end of March. Other inputs included testimony and numerous reports from Member States, the President of the Economic and Social Council, United Nations agencies and programmes, as well as civil society organizations and the private sector.

Presenting the first draft of the Conference outcome document, the President said it must speak to the hundreds of millions who had no other forum to express their unique and often divergent perspectives. It must reflect the call of many nations for new paradigms for building a sustainable economic life which would integrate the values and ethical imperatives that should guide development. The document must reflect the call for greater justice and inclusiveness in global economic life, as well as the passionate call for the promotion of the common good over the obsessive impulse to consume more and more and to dominate over others at any cost.

The Conference must be seen not as an event in itself, but as an inflection point in a long-standing and continuous movement to strengthen the role of the United Nations in global governance, he said. Thus far into the planning for June, agreement had been reached on eliminating the restrictions imposed under previous initiatives to limit the scope of the deliberations. While significant in itself, that achievement would mean almost nothing without an effective mechanism to carry that agenda forward. The business of the Conference would not end on 3 June; it was vitally important to define a follow-up mechanism that would allow Member States to participate in the ongoing work.

The United Nations was and must be the place where the developing countries could speak in their own voice, he continued. But all too often, the United Nations itself spoke with the voice of the "least common denominator" consensus, which unfortunately said little to the urgent needs of developing nations. "If we can begin only with what is already agreed,

it is difficult to see how this Conference or any process that accepts such restrictions can ever be appealing to people who clamour for change, or be conducive to real progress.”

He said that, having travelled extensively in recent weeks to meet with Heads of State and Government and other high-level officials, he had tried his best to reflect their concerns and expectations in the draft outcome document, which would be the basis on which a decision would be made as to “whether to take the June Conference seriously, or to regard it as yet another international charade”. It now contained language that sought to send a clear signal that the Conference was truly dedicated to understanding and responding to the perspective of the many “excluded nations”.

The only way to do that was to begin with language that truly reflected their concerns and aspirations, he continued. In the exercise of his judgement and role, the President had also taken on most of the structure proposed by the facilitators, Frank Majoor of the Netherlands and Camillo Gonsalves of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Nearly all their substantive points had also been taken on board. “If I have erred in my judgement in what is required to make this conference successful, then I accept this responsibility. But time and goodwill will determine the ultimate success of our common efforts.”

Following the President’s presentation, Mr. Majoor protested “considerable” changes to the document in both length and substance, saying neither of the co-facilitators had been consulted on the text circulated. Today’s events were forcing him to “reconsider” his role as a facilitator. Having worked “in a cooperative manner with Member States [...] towards an inclusive, transparent and Member States-led process”, the facilitators had begun to develop a draft outcome document based on numerous verbal and written inputs from groups of Member States and individual countries.

He said those inputs included the summary of a related meeting held by the Economic and Social Council and a ministerial meeting held by the Non-Aligned Movement in Havana, Cuba, among others. Throughout the drafting process, the co-facilitators had striven to keep the General Assembly President and membership informed. “We came up with a very coherent and concise document [...] reflective of all the views expressed and which could serve as a good basis for constructive negotiations in the limited time available.”

The representative of the Czech Republic, speaking on behalf of the European Union, said the bloc had expressed repeatedly its strong interest to do anything possible to ensure the success of the Conference, which was preconditioned on mutual understanding and a spirit of cooperation. The President’s letter of invitation said that all authorized documents would be circulated among the membership and expressed concern over the possible existence of other documents.

He said that the President’s letter of 23 March had informed everyone that the initial draft would be developed in agreement with the facilitators so as to reflect a membership-led process. The resolution from the Follow-up International *Conference on Financing for Development to Review* the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus requested that any drafts be introduced in a transparent manner. Twenty-four days before the event, the European Union reiterated its readiness to work with the President and others to ensure success, but the present situation raised the European Union’s “greatest concerns” and its Presidency would also refer to his capital for an appropriate response.

That position was supported by several other speakers, including the representatives of France, Italy and Spain, who emphasized the importance of a fully intergovernmental and transparent procedure, which had begun with the work of the facilitators. Spain’s representative stressed that it was “extremely important” for the Conference to succeed, and to be a success it must ensure respect for the principle of transparency.

Canada’s representative said the Assembly now had before it a draft outcome expressing the President’s own views. While interested in those views, Canada was concerned about lack of transparency in preparing the document and cautioned against losing the Member States-driven process. The views of all Member States must be considered in preparing for the Conference. The representative of the United States also registered concern about the changed process, which had been expected to be transparent.

Several delegates echoed Germany’s view that it would be useful to circulate the paper prepared by the facilitators “to avoid confusion and have a clear sense of where we stand”.

The President responded by saying there was just one document, but efforts had been made to reflect fully all the important inputs from co-facilitators. Everything possible had been done to ensure that all views were incorporated, including the immense majority whose views were never taken into account.

Representatives of another group of countries -- Cuba, Ecuador, Venezuela, Syria and Iran -- expressed hope that the document presented would provide the basis for negotiations. Venezuela's delegate cited co-facilitator Gonsalves, who had said recently that the draft prepared by the facilitators included diverse opinions, but did not take into account the views of the Group of 77 and China. Venezuela was sure the document presented today included various inputs. All countries must participate, particularly the developing countries, which lacked a sufficient voice in the process.

Cuba's representative expressed concern that 8 to 10 days would be needed to analyse the document, noting that some delegations had expressed their intention to reconsider their participation in the Conference. That was totally inappropriate at the present time. The Assembly had no option but to start work on the document presented by the President, who had discharged his obligation to offer a text. It was now it was up to Member States to discharge their responsibility to start the negotiations.

Also supporting a start to negotiations on the basis of the President's document, Nicaragua's representative added that the subject of the Conference was of immense importance for most countries of the South, who also represented the vast majority of the Organization. Nicaragua thanked the President for allowing their voices to be heard and giving them a chance to take decisions.

Bolivia's representative shared that view, noting that the document before the Assembly would be added to and enriched. It was fundamentally important to get to the heart of the problems over the next few weeks and not lose time on issues that distract the Assembly from the main goal of dealing with the effects of the crisis.

Sudan's representative cautioned against "throwing the baby out with the bath water", stressing the need to concentrate on substance. The co-facilitators should not take the situation as a personal affront, but assess the document on its merits, and on whether it was taking everyone in the right direction. Nigeria's representative also urged Member States not to prejudge the document before first going through it.

Several speakers also agreed with the position of Ghana -- supported by Estonia and Chile -- whose representative said that prolonging the debate would not help bridge the differences. Ghana proposed that the President meet with the negotiating blocs and facilitators to resolve the differences that had arisen this morning.

Morocco's representative said the document presented by the President did not exclude or replace the facilitators' draft and stressed that the aspirations of developing countries must be taken into account in any Conference outcome. A multilateral intergovernmental setting was as important as the need to reach a consensual outcome at the Conference. "We are all condemned to work together, with no exclusions. Let's not disappoint billions of people awaiting a signal from the United Nations General Assembly on this difficult issue."

Also this morning, the Assembly adopted, without a vote, a decision on the arrangements and organization for the Conference (document A/63/L.71).

Turkey's representative, in an explanation of position, stressed the timeliness of the upcoming event, while registering his concern that holding plenary meetings concurrently with round tables would pose a difficulty. The opening plenary should be arranged in such a manner as to enable all high-level participants to address it before the beginning of the round tables.

In other action today, the Assembly adopted a resolution endorsing the recommendations and conclusions of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, in which it discussed the guiding principles of United Nations peacekeeping, mandate definitions and implementation, as well as the restructuring of peacekeeping and the strengthening of operational capacity.

The Special Committee -- also known as the Committee of Thirty Four -- adopted the report during its last session, from 23 February to 20 March, while the draft resolution to endorse its proposals was put forward by the Fourth Committee (Special Political and Decolonization) in paragraph 6 of document A/63/402/Add.1. (For further details, please see Press Release [GA/SPD/419 \(/press/en/2009/gaspd419.doc.htm\)](https://www.un.org/press/en/2009/gaspd419.doc.htm).)

Speaking before its adoption, Martin Palouš (Czech Republic), who took the floor on behalf of the European Union, praised the "streamlined and meaningful" report as a useful tool for dealing with peacekeeping issues. "The European Union considers United Nations peacekeeping not only as the most visible United Nations activity, but also as an effective factor of ensuring security, the protection of civilians and providing humanitarian assistance."

A similarly meaningful and streamlined report would be needed next year, he continued. "Nearly a decade after the Brahimi Report, it is time to revisit the panel's recommendations, review their implementation and look strategically into [the] future." The Australian-Uruguayan Workshop on the Protection of Civilians -- an initiative launched recently by France and the United Kingdom within the Security Council -- might provide a rich background for the Special Committee's future deliberations, alongside other forums such as Canada's thematic peacekeeping seminars and the "New Horizons" project.

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