

13 February 2001

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri,
President of the 55th Session of the General Assembly,
at the General Committee informal brainstorming session**

I declare open the informal brainstorming session on improving the working methods of the General Assembly.

I would like to point out that as this is an informal meeting, no records are being kept. This should enable a constructive and open discussion. However, we have full interpretation to allow for a full exchange of views on this very important issue.

I should also like to point out that at the back of the room there are additional copies of a non-paper called 'talking points', prepared with the assistance of Ambassador Valdes from Chile, who has kindly accepted to assist as facilitator in this process.

Some of you might have wondered why I have launched this issue in the General Committee. Well, after all this is a Committee to assist the President in conducting the work of the Assembly, as stated in the rules of procedure. Furthermore, I see it also as my 'bureau', similar to that of other bodies such as the ECOSOC bureau which regularly discusses issues related to reform. But in order to avoid any doubts that Member States may have, I decided to initiate this "brainstorming" discussion in an informal session open to all members.

Since I took up my office last September, I have addressed the question of improving the working methods of the Assembly on many occasions. I have taken up the issue several times with the chairs of the regional groups and asked them to inform their respective members about my ideas on how to continue this process.

I have addressed this issue also in some of my statements, including one at the Forum of Small States on 15 November 2000 and in a speech in Indonesia on 17 January.

The response I have received has been encouraging, so I have continued my efforts to bring this process forward.

There was a broad recognition by Member States at the Millennium Summit and in the general debate that the UN needs to be strengthened.

As President of the General Assembly, I feel it is my duty to continue the process of reform and this is also in accordance with the mandate given by the Summit. I think that one way to do this is to start by practical steps, as we did in adopting resolution 55/14 on November 3, 2000, when we

agreed on the opening and closing dates of regular sessions. It was a small step, but in my view it added clarity and predictability to our work.

In approaching the issue of reform and strengthening of the UN, I believe we need to start by looking at how well we have implemented the resolutions already adopted.

So I would suggest to you that we start by focusing on reviewing the implementation of already existing General Assembly resolutions in this regard, such as 51/241 and 48/264 and their annexes. Considerable progress has been done since the adoption of these resolutions in 1994 and 1997, and we should continue our efforts.

This does not mean in any way that we should not discuss and explore new ideas on how to strengthen the UN system and in particular the General Assembly as the chief policy-making and deliberative body of the UN. And I welcome any comments or suggestions in this regard.

Once again I would like to invite Member States to discuss the issue of how to improve General Assembly working methods. This is the reason why I have convened this informal 'brainstorming' session of the General Committee open to all delegations.

After this brainstorming session I would propose that the issue be discussed in the informals of the plenary.

The aim of this exercise is to better enable the UN to fulfill the purposes and principles of the Charter and to meet the aspirations of its Members.

It should focus on improving the capacity of the General Assembly to discharge effectively its functions, role and powers and that of the Secretariat to carry out effectively and efficiently the mandates of intergovernmental processes with the necessary transparency and accountability.

I look forward to a fruitful and lively discussion.