

11 January 2011

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Joseph Deiss,
President of the 65th Session of the General Assembly,
to the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
“Reaffirming the Central Role of the United Nations in Global
Governance”**

Mr. President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is a great honor for me to be with you today and I thank you warmly for your invitation.

This is my ninth visit to China; I believe that the visitor can never tire from coming to your country: there is so much inspiration to draw from your hospitality; there are so many cultural and historic treasures to admire, so many natural beauties to discover.

On each visit to China, I am impressed by the rapid pace of change that is taking place, by your capacity to develop and to innovate. The Shanghai Maglev train, whose incredible speed I had the opportunity to experiment in 2005, is an example in case.

Less anecdotic are the strong growth recorded over the last three decades, the significant reduction of poverty and the resilience of the Chinese economy during the recent world economic and financial crisis. China is on track to meet most of the MDG targets. This is an important achievement for your country, but it is also an important signal for the poor around the world, a signal that the MDGs can indeed be reached and that tangible improvements in the livelihoods of the poor are possible. For the international community, there are significant lessons to be drawn from China's economic performance.

I have proposed to concentrate, during the 65th session, the attention and the energy of the General Assembly on three main clusters of issues. Implementing the MDGs and reducing poverty is one of them.

Moving towards a green economy, reconciling growth and environment in order for development to be sustainable is another one. In this area, too, I believe that there are lessons to be learnt from the experience of China in addressing environmental challenges, in preventing and reducing the risk of natural disasters and in coping with rapid industrialization and urbanization.

Today, however, I would like to focus my address on the third thematic cluster figuring high on the agenda of the 65th session: global governance, or more precisely, reaffirming the central role of the United Nations in global governance.

It seems to me that time is ripe to speak about global governance, for at least three reasons.

First, poverty reduction and sustainable development are among the many challenges that the international community is confronted with and that can no longer be solved by states acting individually. The world is more interconnected and interdependent and we are increasingly facing global challenges that affect all countries and their citizens. This is true for the two areas just mentioned, but this is true for many economic and financial issues, for migration and pandemics and for such pressing topics like global terrorism and cyber crime.

These challenges have to be addressed through global decision-making and global action that is: through global governance. Let me clarify that global governance is not the same thing as global government. We are not heading towards establishing a world parliament; global governance is a way of organizing decision-making in a world of sovereign entities with their national parliaments. Furthermore, global governance should be based on the principle of subsidiarity. Problems that can be addressed at the local or national level should be addressed at this level.

Second, a shift in political and economic power is taking place. New markets are emerging. This has been made even clearer by the recent economic and financial crisis. As I have said earlier, China and other emerging markets proved more resilient than more mature economies. Multilateral corporations from the BRICS countries are increasingly competing with as well as acquiring companies from OECD countries. South-South trade and investment flows, as well as South-South cooperation are growing at an impressive pace. The global governance system has to better take into account these economic trends. It is essential to ensure a level-playing field to defuse the perception of unfair practices and prevent the risk of protectionist measures. This would damage us all.

Third, the global governance landscape is getting more complex. Traditional multilateral institutions, like the UN and the Bretton Woods institutions, are criticized for not being efficient and representative enough.

It can seem easier and more expeditious to take urgent action in a smaller forum. New actors, like the G20 and other ad hoc informal groups have emerged.

The point is not to deny the role of these actors. The economic and financial crisis has highlighted the importance of a rapid and coordinated response.

Yet, if we have to acknowledge that these smaller groupings can indeed act in an efficient manner, their inclusiveness and legitimacy on the other hand is questionable. We have to find the best possible articulation between expertise, leadership and legitimacy.

I am convinced that the United Nations and its General Assembly have a central role to play to capture the complexity of this new world and to shape a global governance structure that is efficient, open and representative.

The United Nations enjoys unique legitimacy. With its 192 Member States, the UN General Assembly is a near-universal body and reflects the diversity of situations and interests at stake. It is there to promote the rights of every woman and man on our planet. Any matters within the scope of the Charter may be discussed by the General Assembly. The United Nations, as an operational entity, also has the expertise and the presence in the field to be the central element of the global governance landscape.

In order to raise awareness and advance the discussion on global governance, I proposed to focus the general debate of the General Assembly which took place in New York at the end of September on this issue and to reflect more specifically on ‘reaffirming the central role of the UN in global governance’.

I am satisfied that the topic has found significant resonance in the statements of the Member States. It clearly came out that the United Nations is the central forum for global governance but that urgent reforms need to be undertaken to make the organization fit for the job. The importance of the topic has been further highlighted through the adoption, in December, by consensus in the General Assembly of a resolution sponsored by about 100 Member States on this issue. This will allow our work to continue beyond the 65th session.

There are several aspects to consider:

First, a strong United Nations requires a decisive effort to revitalize the General Assembly, to reform the Security Council and review the work of the Human Rights Council.

A second aspect is to strengthen the economic bodies of the United Nations, enabling them to fully serve the purpose for which they were established. Multilateral diplomacy should not be restricted to the Ministries of Foreign Affairs: experts from sector Ministries, which are ultimately the place where the technical expertise lies, should be drawn in.

Third, as I have just stressed, new actors have emerged, playing a useful role. We thus have to find the appropriate mechanisms for communication, consultation, and cooperation between the UN and these other actors of global governance. These mechanisms will have to encompass non governmental actors from the private sector and civil society, which are playing an increasing role in shaping today’s global world.

I am committed that there will be progress on these issues during the 65th session of the General Assembly.

As a first practical step in the context of the G20 Summit in Seoul, I convened an informal debate of the General Assembly before and after the Summit with the Secretary-General and the G20 host country. This offered an informal institutional framework to all Member states, be they invited to Seoul or not, to be briefed and to discuss the outcomes of the Summit. This is a first step in the process of building bridges with the G20.

This being said, it seems to me that the G20 is at a critical juncture. The Seoul Summit has delivered concrete outcomes in some areas, like the modernization of the IMF and the strengthening of the

financial regulatory framework. This is welcome. To enjoy full legitimacy, these decisions will have to be endorsed by the appropriate international bodies. The IMF reform is a case in point.

Other important issues have been raised, yet, with less tangible results. There is still much work to be done on the G20 proposals in other areas, such as exchange rates misalignments, current account imbalances and economic development. More concrete strategies are still to be defined.

This unveils the crude fact that the resolve to act collectively is very much depending on how risks are perceived. Even smaller groups of countries are confronted to limits in forging consensus when the threat of an imminent crisis appears to be diminishing. Divergences and tensions tend to be more visible and coordinated decision-making becomes more difficult.

The way of conducting consultations and negotiations at each stage of the process is also key for success. Nagoya and Cancun are indeed two recent positive achievements for the UN multilateral diplomacy.

The G8 and G20 summit diplomacy might not be the final state of the governance system for the 21st century. What seems to be sure is that this system will encompass the three poles – expertise, leadership and legitimacy. But the entities belonging to each pole and the relations among them are still in the making.

To further reflect on the functioning of global governance, I will convene an informal debate in June in New York. This will be the moment to think about mechanisms for reaffirming the central role of the United Nations in a governance system that is inclusive and representative.

Let me stress that openness and outreach to non governmental actors is an important aspect for the UN to play its role in global governance. Civil society and the private sector are major partners. Non governmental actors bring a rich diversity of views to the debates of the UN. They are at times better placed to convey the aspirations of the people for more respect, more equality and more justice.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

My vision is of a strong United Nations with a strong General Assembly, which should be the main forum for global debate. China's support and commitment to the United Nations will be instrumental to move forward. As a permanent member of the Security Council and an associated member of the G77, China has indeed a critical role to help forging consensus and adopting solutions for the greater good.

China's emergence among the leading world economies and powers, which is reflected for example by its participation in the G20, not only achieves higher welfare for the Chinese and all their partners, but also bears huge new responsibilities. Chinese leadership will be essential in addressing global challenges and in promoting the fundamental values enshrined in the UN charter.

I thank you for your attention and I look forward to hearing your views.