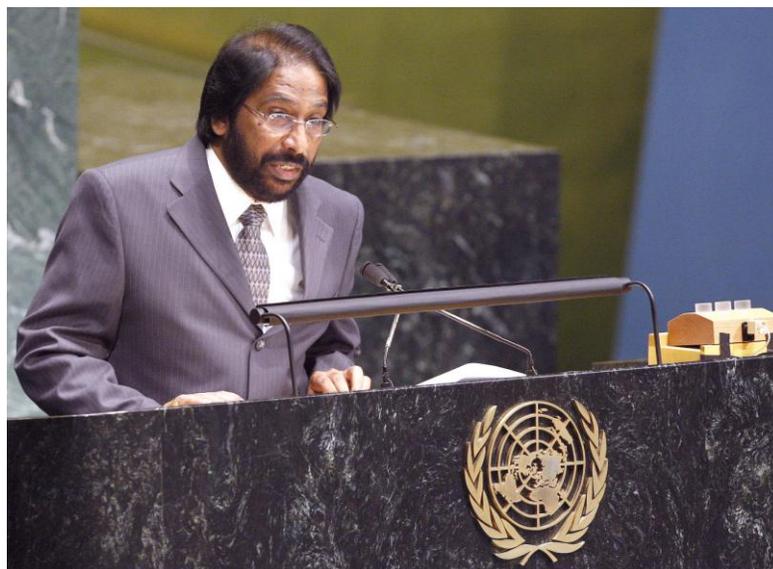




STATEMENT BY MR. TIRUCHI SIVA, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT AND MEMBER OF THE INDIAN DELEGATION, ON AGENDA ITEM 110 – REVITALIZATION OF THE WORK OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, AT THE PLENARY OF THE 63RD SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON NOVEMBER 20, 2008



Mr. President,

India is happy to participate in the debate on the Revitalisation of the General Assembly. This is one of the most important issues on agenda of the 63rd General Assembly as it addresses fundamental questions about the structure and functioning of the world order.

India would like to align itself with the statement on this issue made by the delegation of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Mr. President,

My delegation would like to take note of the proceedings of the *ad hoc* working group on the revitalization of the General Assembly created pursuant to a decision of the 61st General Assembly. The group has painstakingly catalogued decisions in this regard and divided them into three main clusters. These clusters, deal with firstly, working methods, documentation, agenda, etc; secondly, selection of the Secretary

General; and finally, the role and authority of the General Assembly. This helps us obtain an overview of where the revitalization process stands.

A review of the situation reveals, to our regret, though perhaps not to our surprise, that very limited progress has been made on this issue since it was introduced into the Agenda of the General Assembly at its 46th session. My delegation acknowledges the importance of progress where it has taken place, particularly progress in those areas where practical results have been obtained. However, there is a limit to which discussions relating to time limits on speeches and provisions relating to modern technologies will revitalize the General Assembly.

Mr President,

India's position on this issue is guided by its desire to have a more effective United Nations. India also wants an organization that is more responsive to the priorities and aspirations of the Member States, particularly the developing countries, who constitute the vast majority of members.

Mr President,

India believes that the General Assembly will not be empowered merely by strengthening procedures. It will only be empowered if its position as the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative organ of the United Nations is respected in letter and in spirit.

This requires that the General Assembly take a lead in setting the global agenda. The convening power of the United Nations must be used more decisively, particularly on economic issues. The General Assembly must also restore the centrality of the UN in development matters. The Thematic Debates have been a step forward as have been the Annual Ministerial Review and the Development Cooperation Forum of ECOSOC. However, more needs to be done.

The benefits of involving the General Assembly in international economic governance have been made evident during the current financial crisis. A section of its membership drawn from the global South has consistently pointed out that economic orthodoxies proposed by a group of nations have grave shortcomings. These fears, often voiced in this Assembly and its Committees, have been validated by recent events. Events have also underscored the importance of giving a representative body such as the General Assembly a much greater say in shaping the international economic and financial architecture, particularly in the reform of the Bretton Woods Institutions.

Mr President,

Control over legislation, over materials and over men, confers power. Within the United Nations system, it is the Security Council, with its opaque working methods and widely accepted need for reform, that controls certain vital legislation and senior manpower. While the General Assembly has some influence, through the Fifth Committee and the budgetary process, there is a fundamental disparity of authority between the Security Council and the General Assembly.

Mr President,

One of the more egregious examples of how disparity manifests itself is through the process of selection of the Secretary General. India's view is that the General Assembly, being the voice of the international community, must be given a greater say in the process of selection. Several mechanisms to put in place a more inclusive and transparent procedure for the appointment of the Secretary-General, consistent with Article 97 of the Charter, have been proposed. Efforts in this direction are better undertaken when a selection process is not on the horizon or underway. This is an appropriate time.

Mr President,

In our view the appointment of high-ranking UN officials, at the level of Under Secretary General and Deputy Secretary General, should also be subject to scrutiny by the general body of the Member States as represented through the General Assembly. Thus, candidates for such senior positions should require to be confirmed by the General Assembly. This practice is observed in many countries and is consistent with the principles of democracy and representative governance.

The issue of preventing encroachment upon the mandate of the General Assembly and of making the Security Council more responsive to it must also be addressed. The General Assembly's competence in areas such as the process of standard-setting and codification of international law, must be scrupulously respected.

Mr President,

I would like to conclude by submitting that it is only the presence of political will that would revitalize and empower the General Assembly. It is only political will that will provide the General Assembly with the tools and the mechanisms that will enable it to have a role in the making and implementation of international law and in the creation and maintenance of a just and equitable world order.

Revitalisation of the General Assembly has been on its agenda for the last 18 years. India believes that there must be meaningful progress in the areas outlined above to prevent this debate from becoming a sterile discussion.

Thank You

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