



Permanent Mission of
Malaysia
to the United Nations

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STATEMENT BY H.E. MR. HAMIDON ALI
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AT THE AD HOC WORKING GROUP MEETING ON THE REVITALIZATION OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON THE ROLE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN THE
SELECTION OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
NEW YORK, WEDNESDAY, 19 APRIL 2006

Mr. and Madam Co-Chairpersons,

The practice for the selection of the Secretary-General is that the Security Council would nominate a single candidate to be endorsed by the General Assembly. Recalling General Assembly resolution 11 (1) of 24 January 1946 which states that it would be desirable for the Security Council to proffer one candidate only for the consideration of the General Assembly, and for debate on the nomination in the General Assembly to be avoided. This though should be read in light of Article 97 of the UN Charter specifying that the Secretary-General shall be appointed by the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Security Council.

2. In this regard, the General Assembly should have primacy in the selection process of the Secretary-General, which in its current practice is neither transparent nor inclusive to the wider membership of this Organization. It should also be noted, as reiterated in the statement by the distinguished Permanent Representative of India at this Working Group's previous meeting on 16 March 2006, the General Assembly resolution 11 (1) was in a context of a different world order that existed at that time in which it was desirable for one candidate to be proffered, a common candidate agreed upon by the major powers sitting on the Council, so as to straddle the East-West divide during the Cold War.

3. The Cold War is over, but there still is a divide. The East - West divide has been succeeded with one characterized standing between the developed countries of the North and the developing countries of the South. In this regard, the appointment of the Secretary-General who enjoys broad support from the wider membership of the organization, and not just the P5, is crucial.

4. Apart from carrying out his responsibilities as the chief administrative officer of the Organization as well as other functions entrusted to him by major UN organs, the Secretary-General is looked upon, as the world's top diplomat, to prevent conflicts and resolve disputes as well as tackle issues ranging from the fight against poverty and eliminating communicable diseases, reflecting the expanding mandate this Organization is seized of.

5. The General Assembly, where all 191 members are represented and stand equally at the United Nations, is the principal body that suggests policies, approves budgets and elects members of other bodies, including the Security Council. In this regard, the world's top diplomat should consult with members of the General Assembly – the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative UN organ - in solving the world's problems, by reaching common understanding on the wide swathe of issues

discussed in the United Nations, which more times than not have proven to be divisive between the voices of the North and the South. This is particularly so in discussions we have been having on the issue of UN reforms. The next Secretary-General need to be seized of this, as it would be on his shoulders the responsibility would fall on with regard to following-up on the landmark decisions made by our leaders at the World Summit last year.

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6. To this end, the appointment of the Secretary-General should enjoy the broad support of members of the General Assembly, and this important decision should not be relegated merely at the behest of the Security Council, particularly the P5. It should be noted that the General Assembly had played a prominent role in exceptional circumstances in 1950, when the Security Council was deadlocked due to vetoes, by deciding in a majority vote to extend the term of the Secretary-General Trygve Lie without a recommendations from the Council.

7. Thereafter, the General Assembly has assumed a passive role but the issue was revisited again, when in August 1997, the General Assembly adopted resolution 51/241, of which we should recall some of its provisions, namely

“Paragraph 57: The General Assembly shall make full use of the power of appointment enshrined in the Charter in the process of the appointment of the Secretary-General and the agenda item entitled “Appointment of the Secretary-General of the United Nations”.

“Paragraph 60: Without prejudice to the prerogatives of the Security Council, the President of the General Assembly may consult with Member States to identify potential candidates endorsed by a Member State and, upon informing all Member States of the results, may forward those results to the Security Council.”

8. We should build upon these provisions in strengthening the role of the General Assembly in the selection of the Secretary-General, which could in itself invigorate the revitalization of the General Assembly. The time to decide on the selection of the Secretary-General is indeed fast approaching, and we should use whatever time remaining to ensure a transparent, inclusive and open consultative process for the selection. Some ideas worthy of consideration, which have been floated around, is for candidates for the post to provide their manifesto on the Office they are seeking, which could be presented to the General Assembly in a meeting with Member States, or even for a slate of candidatures to be submitted to the General Assembly for it to vote on; these ideas could ensure that the most qualified and suitable person is selected for the job, which is the pre-eminent criteria for the post. In relation to this, the non-paper presented by Canada contains many other useful ideas on the selection process of the next Secretary-General, which could serve a good basis to start our work on. The Working Group could also look into revisiting General Assembly resolution 11 (1) of 1946.

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9. Finally, I also wish to highlight the principle of the rotation for the post of the Secretary-General among the regional groups. As you well know, Asia has not had a Secretary-General since U. Thant. It has been over 3 decades already. It should now be Asia’s turn.

Thank you.