

8 April 2008

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Srgjan Kerim,  
President of the 62nd Session of the General Assembly,  
at the Thematic Debate “Towards a common Understanding of  
Management Reform”**

Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,

Firstly, I would like to thank Member States for their active role and valuable suggestions during the consultation process that laid the ground and elaborated the concepts and format for this debate.

I would also like to express my appreciation to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his leadership in making management reform one of his top priorities for the organization as well as for his invaluable cooperation and support during the preparations for this event.

I would like to thank the Under Secretary-General for Management, Alicia Bárcena, the Officer-in-Charge of the Department of Field Support, Jane Lute, the Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services, Inga-Britt Ahlenius; and, our special guest, the Chairman of the Joint Inspection Unit, Even Fontaine Ortiz for participating in this Thematic Debate.

Excellencies,

There is no doubt that Secretariat and Management reform is of crucial importance to the overall reform agenda of the United Nations.

Over the last sixty years the world has changed considerably and had a huge impact on the role of this Organization. Throughout this period the United Nations made tremendous efforts to balance and maintain the integrity of the multilateral system. However, we now need to renew and retool this Organization so that it can rise to the challenges and evolving needs of the 21st century. A more effective United Nations is an essential part of bridging the gap between the global public's high expectations and our ability to deliver. All our reform efforts are fundamentally about improving the image, authority and relevance of the United Nations.

Just as the Capital Master Plan will renovate and transform the windows, offices and conference rooms – the UN's hardware - we also have to reboot our minds and human processes – the software of the United Nations.

It is imperative that the whole of the Organization becomes more efficient, effective, transparent, and accountable to Member States, and ultimately to the peoples of the world.

This understanding is shared by all Member States, but there are a variety of views on how we should get there. On strategic issues such as this, Member States must demonstrate leadership by reaching agreement and fulfilling their broader responsibility to the effectiveness of the Organization.

Bearing in mind our unique intergovernmental nature, allow me to draw an analogy from the business world; if, for example, Member States relationship to the Organization was more like that of shareholders to a company, ensuring effective governance and management would always be prerequisite for promoting national interests and multilateral relations.

We should remind ourselves of the specific responsibilities that members of the General Assembly have under the Charter for the overall management and governance of the United Nations system, including the Specialized Agencies, in Articles 17, 57 and 63.

For the United Nations, this set of issues raises a difficult but nonetheless important tension that every organization must recognize in order to build an effective working relationship, based on mutual trust, between operational functions and stakeholder rights.

Excellencies,

Recognizing the urgency to act, for more than a decade, the General Assembly has discussed and agreed a variety of Secretariat and Management reform initiatives.

In the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document, the membership reiterated its commitment for comprehensive Management reform. Since then a number of resolutions have been adopted by the Assembly establishing the Ethics Office; the Independent Audit Advisory Committee, the post of Chief Information Technology Officer; upgraded accounting standards, strengthened procurement practices, improved human resource management, providing the Secretary-General with limited budgetary discretion, and, most recently a new system to administer justice in the Secretariat - an important step toward a more comprehensive accountability framework.

I would like to commend the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly entrusted with responsibility for administrative and budgetary matters, whose work helped us to realize these important reforms.

In many areas, we have moved towards the implementation phase of these reforms, though more could be done by the Secretariat to speed up implementation and to keep Member States better informed of progress.

The 5th Committee works tirelessly to hold the Secretariat to account on behalf of the General Assembly, to whom it along with all other Committees is in turn accountable.

While we have made progress, much still needs to be done.

We need to advance further on human resources, procurement, information and communication technology, accountability and oversight to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Organization.

Given the high ideals and public purpose the United Nations was founded upon, we should not only match up to, but set the lead for others to follow in international management practice.

Broadly speaking, Member States should now agree to give greater coherence to all past management reform initiatives, and, reach a common understanding of the future role that they envisage for the Organization.

Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates,

I convened this meeting to invite Member States to express their views on three interrelated issues that are of crucial importance to the effectiveness of the organization;

the way mandates are formulated, implemented and evaluated;  
the planning and budgetary process;  
and, the management of human resources.

I recognize that there are many other related issues; that reform has to be done in a comprehensive manner; and, that there are several outstanding reports from the Secretariat, which once submitted, will enable Member States to move forward more rapidly with the process of Secretariat and Management reform.

However, by reaching a common understanding on these important topics we can prepare the ground for intergovernmental agreement in the future.

These three aspects of Secretariat and Management reform are of crucial importance because;

The way mandates are formulated, implemented, and evaluated lies at the heart of the credibility of General Assembly's decision making process and the outcomes that this organization delivers on behalf of Member States.

It is in all our interests that legislative mandates are effectively and efficiently discharged and that the Secretariat is held to account for results delivered and resources used. I therefore appreciate the Secretary-General's commitment to make accountability a priority issue during his administration.

Member States also need reliable and quality information to inform their decision-making; to accurately assess implementation; to judge the relationship between mandates and resources; and, to evaluate the performance of the Secretariat.

The budgetary process is critical to this process too. In 2000, the General Assembly introduced results-based budgeting. In 2006, it decided to align budgetary and the planning cycles. It is important to strengthen the implementation of these decisions in order to build a fully results-oriented Organization.

Last year, Member States approved the highest level of resources ever for the regular budget.

The membership, however, expressed its concern with the piecemeal approach to the budget process.

Member States would be more informed in their debates about the organization's spending priorities, its budgetary discipline and requests for additional resources if a more complete, timely and coherent analysis of spending, outputs, and outcomes were available.

This point has a direct bearing upon the trust, competency and image of the United Nations, not only in its relationship with Member States, but also its broader perceived competence in the global media.

It is clear that the Secretariat can do better to allocate scarce resources more efficiently. But prudence must also be accompanied with appropriate resources to effectively implement mandates, particularly in light of the growing expectations on the Organization.

Excellencies,

As the Secretary-General has noted, the staff of this organization are its most valuable resources. Modern human resources management is essential to unleash the untapped potential of the Secretariat.

Human resources policies should encourage better career advancement opportunities and conditions of service, training, mobility, and retention of the best staff.

While promoting the highest standards of professionalism, serious efforts should be made to achieve a better gender balance. In addition, equitable geographical representation is essential to ensure that the international character of the Organization is reflected in the composition of its staff.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the serious efforts the 5th Committee has made to reach an agreement on streamlining of contractual arrangements, and the harmonization of the conditions of service. I hope the discussions held in March will pave the way for a substantive decision in the near future.

Excellencies,

It is the responsibility of every Member States to ensure that we move ahead with comprehensive Secretariat and Management reform. It is in all our interest. By engaging substantively in this

important issue the membership can promote more effective multilateral cooperation, and bolster the authority and international standing of this Assembly.

In this regard, the work of the “The Four Nations Initiative” is a good example of Member States demonstrating leadership and driving forward the reform agenda. These proposals to improve governance and management have stimulated debate and raised the profile of the issue.

At a broader strategic level, we need to move beyond piecemeal approaches and look at the big picture to ensure that our reforms efforts keep pace with the changing international landscape.

I look forward to an open and transparent dialogue over the next couple of day to improve our understanding of the different concerns held by delegations, but also, to move ahead through collective efforts to improve the capacity of this Organization to fully implement our decisions.

Thank you for your attention.