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STATEMENT

BY

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THE VICE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

DURING THE GENERAL DEBATE

AT

THE 66TH SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY,

NEW YORK, 26TH SEPTEMBER, 2011

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President of the UN General Assembly,
Excellencies Heads of State and Government,
Secretary-General,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mr. President,

Uganda joins other Delegations in congratulating you upon your election to the Presidency of this August Body. My Delegation has confidence in your ability to steer our deliberations to a successful conclusion. I wish to pay tribute to H.E Joseph Deiss for his effective stewardship of the work of the General Assembly during the last session.

Uganda takes this opportunity to congratulate the Government and people of South Sudan upon attaining statehood and becoming the 193rd member of the United Nations. Uganda also congratulates H.E. Ban Ki Moon upon re-election as Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Mr. President,

The theme of this Session's General Debate, "*The Role of Mediation in the Settlement of Disputes by Peaceful Means*", is most appropriate in light of conflict situations in various parts of the world, including in Africa. When actualized, peaceful settlement of disputes saves lives and property that would otherwise be lost force is used. Strategic interventions, such as mediation, are necessary to mitigate conflict situations and avert crises that threaten the stability not only of nations but also entire regions with adverse effects on development and people's livelihoods. Mediation is a necessary and essential tool for peaceful resolution of conflicts as it aims at supporting disputing parties in the process of negotiating a mutual understanding or agreement.

Mr. President,

Uganda has consistently advocated for a strengthened role of sub- regional and regional organizations in conflict prevention and resolution. When these organisations are involved in the mediation in the settlement of disputes, they play a critical role in bringing about sustainable peace and security. It was against this background that Uganda supported and co-sponsored General Assembly Resolution 65/283 on mediation as a tool for peaceful settlement of disputes. That resolution provides a basis for consolidating normative mediation efforts, reinforcing support for its activities and enhancing the role of Member States.

Mr. President,

Uganda has been involved in various initiatives to bring peace in the Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa and the African continent as a whole.

Our involvement included participation in the Burundi Peace Process; and the IGAD-led negotiations on the Sudan Comprehensive Peace Agreement which culminated into the birth of a new nation of South Sudan which is now participating as an equal partner in the community of nations.

In the case of Somalia, in addition to our contribution through AMISOM, Uganda continues to support engagement of the Somali Transitional Federal Government (TFG) with other actors to promote dialogue in the context of the Djibouti Peace Agreement and the Kampala Accord. In order to consolidate the gains realized on the ground, it is important and urgent that the UN and the rest of the international community strengthen support to Somalia in terms of capacity building for Somali Transitional Federal Institutions; deployment of the additional authorized 3,000 troops; approval of a reliable and predictable funding mechanism as well as the required aviation assets to AMISOM; and provision of urgent humanitarian relief and assistance to meet basic needs of the people through quick impact projects, such as in areas of health, water, sanitation.

Mr. President,

Our experience in conflict prevention and resolution in Africa is that for such efforts to succeed and to be sustainable, a number of factors are necessary.

First, the peace initiatives should be led by the region with strong support from regional organizations, the United Nations and other relevant actors. Second, it is sometimes important to initially prioritize peace before justice to strengthen confidence building between parties. Third, there is need to establish peace and reconciliation mechanisms, including transitional all-inclusive administrations to heal the wounds of conflict. Fourth, post-conflict recovery and reconstruction programmes or projects should be instituted simultaneously to demonstrate benefits of peace dividends.

Mr. President,

Mediation is a worthwhile investment. It costs much less compared to other undertakings such as peacekeeping or peace enforcement. In terms of benefits, effective mediation can avert unnecessary wars with their attendant consequences such as loss of life and property; and contribute to building of capacity for home-grown solutions to address conflicts. The resultant mutual confidence normally arising from mediation between parties can also be instrumental in achieving inclusive political and other arrangements following conclusion of peace agreements. Once this is achieved, a positive impact on consolidation of peace and security as well as sustainable post conflict reconstruction, recovery and development would be realised.

Mr. President,

Uganda believes that differences that might arise between and within countries are better addressed through home grown solutions. External influences or interventions do not necessarily offer sustainable solutions to resolve conflicts. On the contrary, the latter at times tend to contribute to a cycle of destabilizing tendencies.

It is, therefore, important that the involvement of the United Nations, international community and other actors fully takes into account of the interests and concerns of all parties, hence the need for close coordination, consultation and sharing of information with the parties concerned. Support from the international community should be targeted to areas mutually agreed upon with the parties concerned. It is also important to underscore the fact that where potential conflict situations arise and external support is necessary, the international community should provide timely, adequate and robust response.

It is equally necessary to build and strengthen capacity of the sub-regional and regional organizations in mediation. Specifically, in the case of conflicts in Africa, our preferred solution is peaceful settlement through mediation and not military intervention. In the case of the Libyan crisis, the AU has called upon the Transitional National Council (NTC) to establish an all-inclusive transitional government, as proposed in the AU Roadmap for the peaceful resolution of the Libyan conflict.

Mr. President

Uganda would like to make a strong case to this Assembly that Africa should be given the chance to resolve her conflicts. Africa has strong political will to handle them, and any interventions should be aimed at supporting Africa's initiatives to find peaceful and solutions solutions. It is, therefore, imperative that our partners recognize the existing dispute resolution mechanisms of the regional bodies in Africa. I also call upon the UN to fully support Africa in this regard.

Besides, the role of women in mediation must be appreciated and enhanced. Experience has shown that women can contribute a lot to efforts aimed at peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution. It is, therefore, vital that women get increasingly involved in mediation efforts and processes.

Mr. President,

On the Israeli-Palestinian question, Uganda has consistently called upon the Israeli and Palestinian parties to muster the necessary courage to negotiate and reach a peaceful settlement based on a two-state solution, i.e. Israel and State of Palestine living side by side peacefully and within secure borders. We urge both parties to urgently resume negotiations in order to reach a two-state solution that will guarantee durable peace.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, the outcome of this debate should include practical and pragmatic actions to address some of the challenges relating to mediation. These include, but are not limited to: issues of adequacy and predictability of requisite resources; capacity building at national, sub-regional and regional levels; involvement of women; as well as strengthening of coordination collaboration in mediation efforts and processes.

I thank you.