



H.E. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser at the UN General Assembly podium

EDITORS' NOTE Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser was elected to his current post in June 2011. From 1998 to 2011, Al-Nasser served as Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations. During this period, he held leading roles as Chairman of the General Assembly's Special Political and Decolonization (Fourth) Committee and as President of the General Assembly High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation. He also chaired the "Group of 77" developing countries and China at the United Nations in New York. Al-Nasser represented his country on the United Nations Security Council during the two-year term of Qatar as a non-permanent member from 2006 to 2007. He was Security Council President for the month of December 2006. He also presided over three of the subsidiary bodies of the Council. During his term as Ambassador to the United Nations, Al-Nasser also served as a Vice-President of the 57th session of the United Nations General Assembly. At the same time, he served as non-resident Ambassador to a number of countries in the Americas. Earlier, Al-Nasser was appointed as his country's resident Ambassador to Jordan, before which he was first posted to the Permanent Mission of Qatar to the United Nations in New York, as Minister Plenipotentiary. Al-Nasser was appointed Attaché at the Embassy of Qatar in Beirut, Lebanon, in 1972. He was assigned to the Embassy of his country in Islamabad, Pakistan, in 1975 and, later that year, was dispatched to Dubai, United Arab Emirates, where he served as Consul-General for Qatar through August 1981. Al-Nasser was made an honorary fellow of the Foreign Policy Association in New York in 2009 and received an honorary doctorate in international affairs from Chongqing University (China) in 2007. He serves on the boards of a number of institutions, including the Board of Advisors of the New York University Center for Dialogues. Educated in Doha and Beirut, he is fluent in Arabic and English.

What in particular interested you about taking on your current role?

My election to this position is a great honor to me and my country, the state of Qatar, which sponsored and supported my nomination. But my

Finding Solutions to Global Issues

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election would not have been possible without the support of the Asian Group at the UN, to which I am grateful.

You do not get an opportunity every day to be in a position to help find solutions to global issues that will impact people's lives. I hope I can achieve that with the support of all UN Member States.

What is the role of the President of the United Nations General Assembly (GA)?

The President of the GA presides over the activities, functions, and events of the Assembly through a set of procedures that ensures that the elements and ideals of the UN charter are fully complied with. The importance and relevance of the United Nations are better demonstrated when all Member States work together with the joint necessary political will and agreement to achieve the noble goals of this organization.

How is the success of the General Assembly measured?

The success of the General Assembly can be seen or measured in many ways, including the timely and successful conclusion of the works of its six main committees, such as the approval or adoption of the UN's budget or the adoption and implementation of its resolutions that are aimed at improving the lives of people around the world and making the world a better place.

How has the role of the UN evolved?

When the first General Assembly session opened in Westminster in London in January 1946, there were only 51 Member States. Since then, the UN has been at the forefront of many world-changing events, including the decolonization and independence efforts of scores of states. Now there are 193 Member States. But the UN's architecture is in urgent need of reform to make this organization adapt fully to the new challenges of the 21st century. So I have made UN Revitalization and Reform one of the four key pillars of my presidency. The UN architecture of 1946 is neither equipped nor suitable to deal with our current challenges.

How do you define your role and what is the focus of your efforts?

The General Assembly remains the preeminent center for global decision-making. From day one of my tenure, I wanted the General Assembly to be more proactive in global issues and major events.

In my role, I have fostered a closer and more harmonious working relationship with the Secretary General. I also initiated a joint visit to Libya with the Secretary General; we were the first high level officials to visit Tripoli only four days after Gaddafi's

death to let the Libyan people know that the United Nations is willing to lend assistance.

I also proposed a joint trip to Somalia to the Secretary General. We want to convey a message of support to the Somalis so that they pursue the implementation of the road map for the way forward. This is the first time a President of the General Assembly has visited Somalia while in office.

What are the key issues that will be addressed by the General Assembly in the next few months?

Resolving disputes through mediation and peaceful means has become more relevant today. The UN General Assembly adopted a resolution on mediation, which underlines both the central role of the UN in conflict resolution and the importance of coordination among various actors involved in mediation processes. I participated in a conference on mediation in Istanbul last February organized by Turkey's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which provided a platform where all stakeholders interacted with each other and shared their experiences and insights to enhance their understanding on different perspectives of conflict resolution.

Another issue the General Assembly should address is the world financial and economic crisis and its impact on development. I will Co-Chair a thematic debate on the state of the world economy and finance in May 2012 at United Nations Headquarters, with heads of governments, ministers in charge of financial and economic affairs, international financial institutions, and actors from the private sector. The discussions at the political level will contribute to the international efforts to secure a sustained, inclusive, and equitable recovery of the world economy, while taking into account specific needs of the world's poorest and most vulnerable.

We are also focused on the upcoming UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), which will be held in Brazil next June. It is one of the most important UN gatherings and is expected to give an extra push to concerted global efforts towards the achievement of the MDGs, thereby moving the UN's development agenda forward. With this in mind, I had convened a successful retreat on Rio+20 in December 2011 aimed at bringing together various stakeholders to encourage them to go beyond the mundane to reach a broader agreement on the conference's outcome. The success of this conference hinges on the progress we make on renewing political commitments and on strengthening our collective resolve to accelerate implementation of key policies, agreements, and outcomes. ●