Electing Maldives Foreign Minister Abdullah Shahid President of Seventy-Sixth Session, General Assembly Selects Main Committee Bureaus, Economic and Social Council Members

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With a spirit of hope on the horizon, the General Assembly today elected Abdullah Shahid, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Maldives, to serve as President of its seventy-sixth session, while also electing the Bureaus of its six Main Committees and 22 members of the Economic and Social Council.

The 193-member organ also adopted a resolution laying out the modalities of a high-level meeting on human trafficking, to be convened in November.

In accordance with tradition, the Assembly President’s election followed the system of geographical rotation whereby regional groups — the Asia-Pacific States in the present case — put forward a consensus candidate every year.

Having garnered 143 votes of 191 ballots cast, the new President took the podium stressing that the unrelenting spirit of “the Maldivian way” will characterize his “presidency of hope” — one he believes the Assembly needs now.  “We approach the seventy-sixth session in challenging times,” he said, acknowledging the despair and destruction wrought over the last year.  The immediate priority will be to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.  Building on existing approaches, he will aim to address the health of peoples and economies, and to ensure vaccine equity.

Against that backdrop, he said the Assembly’s seventy-sixth session holds the potential to be a “super session for nature” — marked by the twenty-sixth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and other high-level conferences on biodiversity, desertification, energy, sustainable transport and food systems.  As President, he said he will raise his voice against gender discrimination and not participate in panels that are not gender-balanced.

Recalling his recent interactions with Member States, he reaffirmed his pledge to be transparent, inclusive and representative, as well as to engage with civil society in efforts to enrich debate.  He also pledged to build an office that is gender‑balanced, multinational and geographically diverse.  “I assure you I am a man of my word,” he said.  “I intend to get to work right away, starting tomorrow.”

As the sixth Assembly President from a small island developing State — a step which brings the chamber closer to true representation — he concluded by expressing his “undying belief” in multilateralism and ardent desire to serve the international community with conviction and courage.

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres congratulated the new President, drawing attention to Mr. Shahid’s long‑standing diplomatic experience, which gives him a deep understanding of the importance of multilateralism in addressing current challenges.  He commended his selection of “hope” as the central theme, stressing that the seventy-sixth session will grapple with the impact of the pandemic across the three pillars of peace, sustainable development and human rights.

Congratulating the President-elect on behalf of regional groups were representatives of the following Member States:  Eritrea (African States), Kiribati (Asia-Pacific States), Serbia (Eastern European States), Costa Rica (Latin American and Caribbean States), United Kingdom (Western European and Other States) and the United States (Host Country).

Also in accordance with tradition, the Secretary-General then drew lots to determine which delegation would occupy the first seat in the General Assembly Hall during the seventy-sixth session.  Suriname’s delegation was picked for the first seat, to be followed in English alphabetical order by all the other countries, including in the Main Committees.

The Assembly then elected the following 16 Vice-Presidents of its plenary:  Bangladesh, Belgium, China, Côte d’Ivoire, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Finland, France, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mozambique, Philippines, Russian Federation, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, United Kingdom, United Republic of Tanzania and the United States.  Those elected join the five permanent members of the Security Council — China, France, Russian Federation, United Kingdom and the United States — which serve annually as Assembly Vice-Presidents.

Members also held consecutive meetings of its six Main Committees to elect members of their respective bureau by acclamation.

The First Committee (Disarmament and International Security) elected Omar Hilale (Morocco) as Chair; Amir Hamzah Mohd Nasir (Malaysia); Saša Milanović (Bosnia and Herzegovina) as Vice-Chairs; and Sanna Leena Orava (Finland) as Rapporteur.  The Committee will hold elections for the remaining vacancy from the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States upon notification by the Group.

The Fourth Committee (Special Political and Decolonization) elected Egriselda Aracely González López (El Salvador) as Chair; Angelito Ayong (Philippines), Lukáš Peter Prvý (Slovakia) and Mathew Edbrooke (Liechtenstein) as Vice-Chairs; and Youssouf Aden Moussa (Djibouti) as Rapporteur.

The Second Committee (Economic and Financial) elected Vanessa Frazier (Malta) as Chair; Nadja Micael (Eritrea), Karolina Krywulak (Poland) and Claudia Larue (Dominican Republic) as Vice-Chairs; and Prathma Uprety (Nepal) as Rapporteur.

The Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) elected Mohamed Siad Doualeh (Djibouti) as Chair; Joongil Shin (Republic of Korea), Devita Abraham (Trinidad and Tobago) and Hanne Carlé (Belgium) as Vice-Chairs; and Maria‑Iuliana Niculae (Romania) as Rapporteur.

The Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary) elected Mher Margaryan (Armenia) as Chair; Ahmed Mohamed Ismail Elmahs (Egypt) and Mike Ammann (Switzerland) as Vice-Chairs; and Megayla Austin (Guyana) as Rapporteur.

The Sixth Committee (Legal) elected Alya Ahmed bin Saif al-Thani (Qatar) as Chair; Ahmed Abdelaziz (Egypt), Justina Krutulyté (Lithuania) and Ricardo García López (Spain) as Vice-Chairs; and Ana L. Villalobos (Costa Rica) as Rapporteur.

In the afternoon, the Assembly, acting without a vote, adopted a draft resolution titled, “Modalities, format and organization of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the appraisal of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons” (document A/75/L.93).  Several delegations disassociated themselves from the consensus on that text.

By its terms, members decided that the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the appraisal of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons will be held on Monday, 22 November, and Tuesday, 23 November, and will consist of both open and closed plenary meetings, as well as interactive panel discussions.  It will feature statements by the President of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General, the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Council on trafficking in persons, especially women and children.  It will also feature an eminent person actively engaged in the fight against trafficking in persons and a representative of civil society, at least one of whom will be a survivor, and both of whom are to be identified by the President of the General Assembly.

Among additional meeting details, the Assembly decided to hear statements by Member States and observers, and to determine the format — whether in-person, virtual or hybrid — by October, based on an assessment of the health conditions and in consultation with Member States.  It also requested the President to hold open, transparent and inclusive intergovernmental negotiations with all Member States, led by cofacilitators, with the aim of producing a short and concise political declaration for adoption at high-level meeting’s opening session.

Prior to the adoption of resolution “L.93”, several delegations put forward an amendment (document A/75/L.94) to operative paragraph 9, which was defeated by a recorded vote of 29 in favour to 82 against with 34 abstentions.  Had it passed, changes would have been introduced to the resolution’s language concerning the modalities for drawing up a list of representatives of relevant non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, academic institutions and the private sector who may participate in the high-level meeting.

Introducing the amendment, the representative of China said his delegation supports global efforts to prevent and address trafficking in persons, as well as a collaborative approach among Member States to those ends.  Noting the important contributions of civil society members and non-governmental organizations, he welcomed the participation of nearly 6,000 non-governmental groups which enjoy consultative status with the Economic and Social Council.  He also welcomed that the Assembly has long employed a consensus-based process for the participation of non-governmental organizations that lack consultative status.

Voicing regret that such long‑standing precedent has been broken in recent months and unity among Member States has been undermined, he said that, despite many hours of consultations, the concerns of some delegations were not addressed.  For that reason, his delegation along with several others were forced to propose the amendment contained in “L.94”, which changes operative paragraph 9 to include verbatim language from past resolutions that were adopted by consensus and without reservations.

Echoing some of those points were the representatives of Syria, Algeria, Venezuela, Iran, Belarus and the Russian Federation.

The representative of Portugal, speaking on behalf of the European Union, noted the critical and enriching participation of civil society groups in the Assembly’s work, especially on an issue as multidimensional and far-reaching as human trafficking.  He welcomed the original language in operative paragraph 9, voicing regret that it was subject to a vote.  “We cannot support an amendment that deviates from the zero draft,” he said, noting that in its current form operative paragraph 9 strengthens transparency and facilitates the engagement of civil society.  That participation is all the more crucial in a world which is increasingly hostile to non-governmental groups, he stressed, rejecting the proposed amendment.

The representatives of the United States, Australia (also on behalf of Canada and New Zealand) and the United Kingdom echoed those sentiments, with the latter noting that operative paragraph 9, as it stands in the original text, is designed to prevent any one delegation from wielding a veto over the participation of a civil society group.  Rather than changing precedent, he said, operative paragraph 9 represents a return to the Assembly’s previous consensus on the matter, which is reflected in resolutions as far back as 2001.

Operative paragraph 9 of “L.93” was also the subject of a separate vote.  The original paragraph was retained by a recorded vote of 100 in favour to 12 against with 31 abstentions.

In other business, the Assembly elected 22 members of the Economic and Social Council.  Eighteen were elected to replace those members whose terms of office are set to expire on 31 December, while four were selected in by‑election to fill the remaining terms of office of Council members who will relinquish their seats before the end of their terms.

Elected to serve three-year terms beginning 1 January 2022 were:  Afghanistan, Belgium, Belize, Canada, Chile, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Czech Republic, Eswatini, India, Italy, Kazakhstan, Mauritius, Oman, Peru, Tunisia, United Republic of Tanzania and the United States.

The new members were elected according to the following pattern:  four from African States, four from Asia-Pacific States, two from Eastern European States, three from Latin American and Caribbean States and four from Western European and other States.

The four members chosen in the by-election will fill new vacancies resulting from the decision by Australia to relinquish its seat in favour of New Zealand; Finland to relinquish its seat in favour of Denmark; Germany to relinquish its seat in favour of Israel; and Switzerland to relinquish its seat in favour of Greece, all on on 31 December.

The Assembly therefore elected Denmark, New Zealand and Switzerland to serve the unexpired terms of Finland, Switzerland and Australia, commencing on 1 January 2022 and expiring on 31 December 2022.  They elected Israel to serve the unexpired term of Germany, commencing on 1 January 2022 and expiring on 31 December 2023.

As of 1 January 2022, the remaining States making up the 54-member organ will be:  Argentina, Austria, Bangladesh, Benin, Bolivia, Botswana, Bulgaria, China, Colombia, Congo, France, Gabon, Guatemala, Indonesia, Japan, Latvia, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Mexico, Montenegro, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Panama, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Solomon Islands, Thailand, United Kingdom and Zimbabwe.

Members also decided to include the item titled “Appointment of the Secretary-General of the United Nations” in the agenda of its current session under the heading “Organizational, administrative and other matters”, and to consider that item directly in plenary.

The Assembly will reconvene at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, 8 June, to open a high‑level meeting on the Implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the political declarations on HIV/AIDS.

Voting Results for General Election:

African States

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| --- | --- |
| Number of ballot papers: | 187 |
| Number of invalid ballots: | 1 |
| Number of valid ballots: | 186 |
| Abstentions: | 0 |
| Number of Members present and voting: | 186 |
| Required majority: | 124 |
| Number of votes obtained by country: |   |
| Côte d’Ivoire | 183 |
| Eswatini | 177 |
| Mauritius | 181 |
| Tunisia | 183 |
| United Republic of Tanzania | 182 |

Asia-Pacific States

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Number of ballot papers: | 187 |
| Number of invalid ballots: | 0 |
| Number of valid ballots: | 187 |
| Abstentions: | 1 |
| Number of Members present and voting: | 186 |
| Required majority: | 124 |
| Number of votes obtained by country: |   |
| Afghanistan | 181 |
| India | 179 |
| Kazakhstan | 180 |
| Oman | 182      |

Eastern European States

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Number of ballot papers: | 187 |
| Number of invalid ballots: | 0 |
| Number of valid ballots: | 187 |
| Abstentions: | 2 |
| Number of Members present and voting: | 185 |
| Required majority: | 124 |
| Number of votes obtained by country: |   |
| Croatia | 180 |
| Czech Republic | 176 |

Latin American and Caribbean States

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Number of ballot papers: | 187 |
| Number of invalid ballots: | 0 |
| Number of valid ballots: | 187 |
| Abstentions: | 4 |
| Number of Members present and voting: | 183 |
| Required majority: | 122 |
| Number of votes obtained by country: |   |
| Belize | 179 |
| Chile | 178 |
| Peru | 175 |

Western European and Other States

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Number of ballot papers: | 187 |
| Number of invalid ballots: | 0 |
| Number of valid ballots: | 187 |
| Abstentions: | 5 |
| Number of Members present and voting: | 182 |
| Required majority: | 122 |
| Number of votes obtained by country: |   |
| Belgium | 167 |
| Canada | 169 |
| Italy | 175 |
| United States | 166 |