

Statement by the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency Group

**at the second thematic debate of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the
Revitalization of the General Assembly**

on Working methods of the General Assembly

20 March 2018

Co-Chairs,

Let me start by thanking you for convening the second thematic meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly during the 72nd session.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group or in short ACT, a cross-regional group comprised of the following 25 small and mid-sized countries working together to improve the working methods in United Nations organs, particularly the Security Council: Austria, Chile, Costa Rica, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Gabon, Ghana, Hungary, Ireland, Jordan, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Maldives, New Zealand, Norway, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Portugal, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland and Uruguay.

In the past the ACT group has been mainly engaged on the cluster dealing with the selection and appointment of the Secretary-General and other executive heads and also consolidated its experience learnt from the most recent Secretary-General selection process in document A/72/514-S/2017/846. This year however, the group decided to widen the scope and explore further ways on how it can contribute to the success of the revitalization process. Allow me therefore to convey the ACT groups' comments on a few points concerning the Working methods of the General Assembly:

In order for the GA to live up to its role as one of the principal organs of the UN, it must be able to take relevant action on issues of common concern to the international community. It is paramount that the GA continues to increase its efficiency in a context of emerging global challenges.

As a group striving for improved transparency and accountability at the UN, we note with appreciation the working groups' achievements concerning the conduct of elections in the General Assembly. We believe that there might be still room for improvement, especially when it comes to scrutinizing candidates and their campaigns. We stand ready, in line with resolution 71/323 to continue discussions with a view to creating a **code of conduct to guide election campaigns** this year. To begin, we support the idea of strengthening existing as well as establishing new fora, where the wider membership can engage with candidates regarding their commitment to the goals and principles of the bodies they wish to serve on. We believe that voluntary adherence to such initiatives by candidates as well as using those as criterion for support can offer one possible way forward.

The group welcomes practical achievements resulting from the revitalization process, such as **innovative IT solutions** that facilitate the work both of the GA as well as of delegations. We also welcome the improved format of the **UN Journal**, however we believe that there is a need of further fine-tuning this year, in order to achieve a more user-friendly platform, with a straight forward access, as envisaged by the membership in last year's agreement.

Another practical issue where the working group could make a difference is the **rationalization of side-events** during the High-level week of the General Assembly.

Resolutions 70/305 and 71/323 both refer to the need of further rationalizing and simplifying the GA agenda. We support attempts that look into finding synergies, eliminate duplication and overlap and to promote complementarity in the consideration and negotiation of similar and related issues. We also encourage exploring possible avenues for **biennialization and triennialization** of some **agenda items** with the aim of reaching tangible improvements this year. We recognize the leading role of heads of main UN organs, like the President of the GA and of the ECOSOC as well as the Chairs of the Main Committees in this regard. We encourage them to further improve their coordination mechanisms in order to reprioritize topics, eliminate overlaps and duplications of the agendas. We also welcome the process of the **Alignment of the work of the General Assembly and ECOSOC on the 2030 Agenda** and will be happy to look into further suggestions in this regard as discussions unfold.

To conclude, let me assure you that the ACT group is looking forward to participating constructively in the meetings of this working group and is looking forward to exchanging views with other groups and delegations to improve the functioning of the United Nations as our ultimate goal.
