

UDC 341.123.042:341.783
Biblid 0543-3657, 68 (2017)
Vol. LXVIII, No. 1168, pp. 102–116
Original Scientific Paper

STRENGTHENING THE INSTITUTIONAL MEMORY OF THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Jelica GORDANIĆ¹

Abstract: Strengthening the Institutional Memory of the Office of the President of the General Assembly becomes a separate cluster of the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly on the 64th session. The Office of the President of the General Assembly is faced with many problems, including the lack of financial resources as well as the lack of human resources. This function is relatively unknown to the general public and it had been overshadowed by the Secretary-General. The paper analyses the role and the position of the President of the General Assembly as well as the work and progress of the *Ad Hoc* Working Group for the revitalization of the General Assembly on this issue. Some progress has been achieved, but the most important problems remain unsolved.

Key words: President of the General Assembly, revitalization, General Assembly, *Ad Hoc* Working Group, United Nations.

INTRODUCTION

Each representative body requires a person responsible for its functioning, preparation of the agenda, adoption of conclusions, etc. In the system of the United Nations, the General Assembly is one of the six main organs. It is described as the chief deliberative, policy-making, and representative organ of the United Nations. The General Assembly is “the only one of the six that includes representatives of all member states, simultaneously respecting and confirming their sovereign equality by giving each of them one vote, regardless of military power, wealth, population, size of territory, or any other characteristic” (Peterson, 2006, p. 1). Article 10 of

¹ Jelica Gordanić, Research Associate. Institute of International Politics and Economics, Belgrade. E-mail: jelica@diplomacy.bg.ac.rs. This paper is part of the project “Serbia in Contemporary International Relations: Strategic Development and Firming the Position of Serbia in the Process of International Integration – Foreign Policy, Economic, Legal and Security Perspectives”.

the Charter of the United Nations provides that “The General Assembly may discuss any questions or any matters within the scope of the present Charter or relating to the powers and functions of any organs provided for in the present Charter, and, except as provided in Article 12, may make recommendations to the Members of the United Nations or to the Security Council or to both on any such questions or matters..”

On the other side, provisions of the Charter of the United Nations are quite modest when it comes to the internal organization of the General Assembly. Article 21 of the Charter provides that “the General Assembly shall adopt its own Rules of procedure. It shall elect its President for each session.” No other mentions of the President of General Assembly can be found in the Charter and “as in the British fashion, his role is more a reflection of evolution than definition in the Rules of procedure” (Zafrulla Khan, 1964, p. 231).

After 70 years of functioning, the General Assembly of United Nations is faced with some serious problems. Having in mind significance of this body, the Member States have discussed how to improve the General Assembly’s relevance and effectiveness for the last 24 years. Beginning in its 60th session (and skipping the 61st session), the General Assembly annually establishes an *Ad Hoc* Working Group on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly. Three thematic clusters of revitalization debate have been:

- enhancing the role and authority of the General Assembly;
- the role of the General Assembly in the election of the Secretary-General;
- improving the working methods of the General Assembly.

Having in mind various problems of the Office of the President of the General Assembly (related to adequate funding of the Office of the President and providing adequate staff) this issue becomes a separate cluster on the 64th session. Since the 64th session, the *Ad Hoc* Working Group on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly discusses this issue as “Strengthening the institutional memory of the Office of the President of the General Assembly”.

THE ROLE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

In a formal sense, the President of the General Assembly has only one function - to conduct the Assembly’s work. Performing this task, the President must serve the will of the Assembly. The Rules of procedure of the General Assembly define in more detail manner the role of the President.

Rule 35 provides that “the President shall declare the opening and closing of each plenary meeting of the session, direct the discussions in plenary meeting, ensure observance of these rules, accord the right to speak, put questions and

announce decisions. He shall rule on points of order and, subject to these rules, shall have complete control of the proceedings at any meeting and over the maintenance of order thereat.”

The President may, in the course of the discussion of some subject, propose to the General Assembly the limitation of the time to be allowed to speakers, the limitation of the number of times each representative may speak, the closure of the list of speakers or the closure of the debate. He has the power to propose the suspension or the adjournment of the meeting or the adjournment of the debate on the item under discussion. The President speaks at the General Assembly on ceremonial occasions and he has its own page on the UN website.

At first glance, it seems that the role of the President of the General Assembly is strictly formal. However, besides the formal aspect of the role, the President of the General Assembly could significantly contribute to better functioning of the General Assembly. For example, resolutions of the General Assembly represent a full weight of world opinion when they are adopted by broad consensus of the Member States. The President of General Assembly is in a position to help developing consensus and to work as a servant of the Assembly he/she can facilitate the adoption of resolutions. (Zafrulla Khan, 1964, p. 233-234). Also, in cases when the President of the General Assembly has good leadership capabilities, he may resolve certain disagreements within Members of the General Assembly by good services. If the Member States consider that the President is neutral in a disputed case or disagreement situation, he/she may contribute to the solution of such cases (which often have a tendency to complicate sessions of the General Assembly).

Important parts of the role of the President of the General Assembly are informal consultation. In the 1960s and 1970s, there was a positive tendency in promoting informal consultation within the United Nations system. Incensement of informal consultation had made some aspects of the President’s function easier. For example, most elections are now settled beforehand, with each regional group informing the President of its candidates, and the President reads out a consolidated list of endorsed candidates for the Assembly approval. Unlike the early sessions in the 1940s and 1950s, when contested elections often required several ballots to resolve, balloting now occurs only when a regional group cannot agree on a candidate. Nowadays, the established practice of informal consultations usually settle matters in advance (Peterson, 2006, p. 54). On the other hand, informal consultations had made some aspects of the President’s role more demanding. The President needs to determine which way the Member States want to adopt a draft of a resolution. They can take a vote; use some of the formulas for adoption without a vote or take a recorded vote. As each draft comes up for the adoption, the President reads its name and document number, then either calls a vote or announces that unless there is objection the draft will be considered adopted by the particular formula chosen. From

time to time, last minute disagreements between the Member States might cause an objection and then a vote (Peterson, 2006, p. 54).

(Non)political role of the President of the General Assembly

As we have seen above, the Rules of procedure provide a role of the procedural character for the President of the General Assembly. In order to discourage any potential political ambitions, Rule 36 provides that “The President, in the exercise of his functions, remains under the authority of the General Assembly.”

However, the role of the President of General Assembly is not always of ceremonial and protocolary character only. Depending on personality, diplomatic experience and political skills, the President can significantly contribute to better and more efficient work of the Assembly. For seventy years of the existence of the United Nations, Presidents of the General Assembly have often been in politically sensitive situations whose solution required a lot of diplomatic experience as well as political courage. Some measures and decisions took by former Presidents of the General Assembly in politically sensitive situations could even be characterized as controversial.

Let us see some of the examples.

Jean Ping, the 59th President of General Assembly, had to forge a compromise text, the concluding document of the UN World Summit 2005. It was very hard for him to find a compromise acceptable to all Member States on all the reform issues. But then John Bolton, the neo-conservative US ambassador to the UN, a recess appointee by President George W. Bush in August 2005 to evade a heavy Senate opposition, appeared on the scene and demanded in this late phase of the negotiations the renegotiation of dozens of issues, which spurred other delegations to also raise their own demands again. Jean Ping, in a close collaboration with the Secretary General at the time, Kofi Annan, worked in small groups of country delegates to find a compromise in the face of Bolton’s intransigence. As the date approached when heads of state were to adopt the final text, Ping had the courage to ignore all the unsolved issues in the draft and to draw up a text based on his and Annan’s convictions alone. Without President Ping’s diplomatic skill and political courage the UN World Summit 2005 could be a failure (Volger, 2012).

Also, the 60th President of General Assembly, Jan Eliason, showed great diplomatic skills in achieving consensus in the General Assembly to create by resolutions two new UN bodies in 2006- the Human Rights Council (replacing the Human Rights Commission) and the Peacebuilding Commission. In achieving these aims Eliason used the mass media and the nongovernmental organizations in his negotiation techniques (Volger, 2012).

Diplomatic experience and political courage of the President of General Assembly leave the trace in United Nations history in the 1970s during the apartheid

politics in South Africa. Having in mind failures of the UN Security Council to act on this issue, an alternative reaction was followed by the General Assembly. Under the pressure of world majority, the General Assembly used to reject the credentials of South Africa delegation from 1970 to 1973. However, by the so-called Hambro formula (named after the President of the General Assembly Edward Hambro) representatives of South Africa were allowed to sit and participate in its deliberations (Blavoukos, Bourantonis, p. 49-50). Hambro formula, which became the *modus operandi* in the UN General Assembly made it clear that the rights and privileges of state membership were not affected or endangered by the rejection of the credentials of its delegation to the United Nations. This interpretation was shared by other Presidents of the General Assembly until 1974. In 1974, then-President of the General Assembly Abdulaziz Bouteflika discredited this interpretation about the rejected credentials and gave a new interpretation on this issue. In his opinion: “On the basis of consistency with which the General Assembly has regularly refused to accept the credentials of the delegation of South Africa, one may legitimately infer that the General Assembly would in the same way reject the credentials of any other delegation authorized by the Republic of South Africa to represent it, which is tantamount to saying in explicit terms that the General Assembly refuses to allow the delegation of South Africa to participate in its work” (Gross, p. 662).

From the examples above, it is clear that depending on the political and diplomatic experience, the function of the President of the General Assembly may have a significant political influence. It is not exclusively a protocol function. For this reason, it is necessary to elect experienced diplomats or politicians for the position of the President of the General Assembly. Their diplomatic and political experience could help finding the appropriate solution for certain international problems or procedures.

Also, in the first decades of the United Nations functioning, there were some ideas that the President of the General Assembly should personify this Organization. That never happened. From the very beginning, the function of Secretary General overshadowed the role of the President of General Assembly. After Dag Hammarskjöld’s service as a Secretary-General, the personification of the whole Organization into the Secretary-General’s work had remained (Peterson, 2006, p. 54). The role of the President of General Assembly is relatively unknown to the general public.

ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Election of the President of the General Assembly is regulated by the Rules of Procedure. Rule 30 provides that “the General Assembly shall elect a President and twenty-one Vice-Presidents at least three months before the opening of the

session over which they are to preside. The President and the Vice-Presidents so elected will assume their functions only at the beginning of the session for which they are elected and shall hold office until the close of that session. The Vice-Presidents shall be elected after the election of the Chairmen of the six Main Committees referred to in rule 98, in such a way as to ensure the representative character of the General Committee.”

If, at the opening of a session of the General Assembly, the President for that session has not yet been elected, in accordance with rule 30, the President of the previous session, or the chairman of that delegation from which the President of the previous session was elected, shall preside until the Assembly has elected a President (General Assembly Rules of Procedure, Rule 31).

This manner of election of the President of the General Assembly has been established by the resolution 56/509 adopted by the General Assembly on 10th July 2002. This resolution has amended rules 30, 31 and 99 of the Rules of procedure of the General Assembly. The previous process of election of the President stated that: “The General Assembly shall elect a President and seventeen vice-presidents, who shall hold Office until the close of the session at which they are elected.”

A transitional period of three months established by the Resolution 56/509 is important for the newly elected President. During the transitional time, the new President should learn more about its function so that he/she could avoid “hidden obstacles”. Resolution 69/321 adopted by General Assembly encourages “exchanges between the President-elect of the General Assembly and the Council of Presidents so that Presidents-elect may benefit from the experiences of former Presidents in terms of best practices and lessons learned, as part of strengthening the institutional memory of the Office of the President of the General Assembly.” The same Resolution requests the outgoing Presidents of the General Assembly to transmit to their successors a summary of their work during their terms of office and to brief them on the lessons learned and best practices, and encourages the holding of a structured and constructive exchange of experiences between them in the three-month transition period.

It is customary that no permanent member of the United Nations Security Council has ever served as the President of the General Assembly. Since the establishment of the United Nations, one President of the General Assembly was elected to preside a session. Number of Vice-Presidents had changed. The first session of UN General Assembly had seven Vice-Presidents. The enlargement of the United Nations membership was followed by the increment of the number of Vice-Presidents of General Assembly- from the original seven to 16, and finally 21 in 1978.

Due to the strengthening of regional groups in the General Assembly, the election of the President of the General Assembly is based on the principle of

proper geographical rotation. The choice of a particular candidate within a regional group depends on numerous factors- including the position and political significance of the country of the region, as well as personal qualities and qualifications. Traditionally, a regional group proposes one candidate. In practice, there were some exceptions from this rule. For example, in 1991, the Asian group nominated three candidates, and in 2012, the Eastern European group nominated two candidates for the President of the General Assembly. In these cases, the President was elected by voting in the General Assembly.

Also, there was a practice of election of a former chairman of the First Committee (if he/she is a citizen of countries of a respective regional group) for the President of the General Assembly. Knowledge of the Rules of procedure and the leadership experience previously obtained in the First committee were considered an excellent preparation for the function of the President of the General Assembly (Zafrulla Khan, 1964, 232).

The same principle of election (the principle of proper geographical rotation) applies to the election of the Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly. By Resolution 33/138 of 19 December 1978, the number of Vice-Presidents has been increased to 21 and the Vice-Presidents are elected by the following pattern:

- six representatives from African States;
- five representatives from Asian States;
- one representative from an Eastern European State;
- three representatives from Latin American States;
- two representatives from Western European or other States;
- five representatives from the Permanent members of the Security Council.

PROBLEMS OF THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Lack of financial resources

One of the main issues related to the Office of the president of the General Assembly is the lack of adequate financial resources. The Office has three direct funding sources at its disposable.

The Office of the President of the General Assembly has its own regular budget. In 1998, the Member States approved the establishment of an annual budget of 250,000 USD for the Office. The budget for the 69th Session was 322,000 USD (Information Note – The Office of the President of the General Assembly, 2015, p. 4). The budget has not changed since 1998, except for inflation adjustments. The regular budget covers the President's official hospitality, the official

travel and other expenditures relating to the President's official responsibilities. Communication devices and other *Ad Hoc* computer equipment for the Office are also charged against this budget. Having in mind that the regular budget for the Office remained unchanged since 1998, Resolution 69/321 adopted by the General Assembly recalls its request to the Secretary-General "to submit, in the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016–2017, proposals to review the budget allocation to the Office of the President of the General Assembly in accordance with existing procedures, and in this connection looks forward to considering such proposals during the main part of its seventieth session."

Having in mind that regular budget is not enough for the costs of the Office of the President of the General Assembly a Trust fund for the Office was established by the Secretary-General in 2010. The Member States and others may contribute to the Trust fund. The fund has mainly been used for general administrative, logistical and management support, and to support thematic debates. The trust fund is administered by the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management (DGACM) in accordance with the UNFRR and Secretary-General bulletin and administrative instructions on the administration and management of Trust funds. Contributions to the Trust fund could be made by states, intergovernmental organizations, national institutions, non-governmental organizations, as well as natural and judicial persons, provided that such contributions as set forth are made in accordance with the United Nations Financial Regulations and Rules (Information Note – The Office of the President of the General Assembly, 2015, p. 6) So far, contributions to the Fund are insufficient.

The third way of funding of the Office of the President of General Assembly is funded from the Member state that nominates the President. The Member state covers some certain expenses of the President- his salary, accommodation or other expenses related to his/her function. The President of the General Assembly is not a UN employee so he/she does not receive a salary from the United Nations. Payment of the salary is a matter of the President's country of origin. This became a problem for less wealthy members. According to the Report of *Ad Hoc* Working Group from 3 September 2015, the unpredictable resource situation might pose the risk that some Member States would be prevented from ever offering a candidate for the post of President of the General Assembly.

On the Fourth Thematic Meeting of the 68th GA session in the *Ad Hoc* Working Group on the Revitalization of the General Assembly held on 14th May 2014, Noel Sinclair, then Deputy Chef de Cabinet of the President, stated: "Despite an increase in the number of mandates and an increase in the cost of living in NYC, the budget of the Office of the President of the General Assembly has been the same since 1999. This budget must be supplemented by voluntary member state contributions." He requested furnished accommodation for the President of the General Assembly and that the Office receives a separate budget for international

travel (Jagtiani and Maresca, 2014). The Member states have recognized the problem of the Office. Speaking in the name of the Non-Aligned Movement, Algeria stated that “The NAM attributed great importance to strengthening the Office of the President of the General Assembly and included increasing the resources of the Office as a potential option. The NAM observed that the role and activities of the President have evolved over the years to include implementing resolutions, participating in working groups and consultations, and taking steps to make the Assembly’s work more visible on the world stage“ (Jagtiani and Maresca, 2014). Speaking in the name of East Asian States, Myanmar noted that although the General Assembly was the chief deliberative, policy-making organ of the UN, much needed to be done to reclaim this role. It observed that the role and responsibilities of the President of the General Assembly had evolved; not only did it have more agenda items, but it also had to work throughout the year rather than only during the main session (Jagtiani and Maresca, 2014).

On the General debate of the *AdHoc* Working Group of the General Assembly held on 19 January 2016, the Member states repeated their attitude about the Strengthening of the institutional memory of the Office of the President of the General Assembly. The Non-Aligned Movement stated that the Office of the President of General Assembly should have significant human and financial resources from the general budget and the amount allocated for these purposes should be increased. The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States emphasized that the Office must have enough financial resources to fulfill its mandate, and Costa Rica observed that the allocation of resources to the Office from the general budget has not increased in 15 years (Marcesa, 21 January 2016, Center for UN Reform Education).

Lack of human resources

Besides the lack of financial resources, another lack related to the Office of the President of General Assembly is the lack of staff and human resources. Member States were required to ensure an adequate financing, including the timely provision of staff. Timely provision of staff is an issue of great importance. It became a practice that Presidents got a full complement of appropriate staffing, but the session was well under way. The Member States share the attitude that the human resources of the Office could be strengthened. The Office should be provided with more permanent staff members. Due to the lack of staff, the Office requires help in staff from the Member States and other UN bodies. Some Member State consider that the Office should not depend on the generosity of Member States in order to function, considering that it is inappropriate for the Office to be obligated to ask states for its staff.

The Office of the President of the General Assembly receives help from other UN bodies- such as the Secretariat, The Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, The Department for Safety and Security, The Office of Legal Affairs, etc.

These bodies provide financial as well as technical assistance to the Office of the President of the General Assembly. The Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management provided a briefing on the staffing, funding and budgetary support for the Office of the President of the General Assembly, as well as the overall support provided by the Department. In terms of staffing, the overall resources allocated in support of the Office exceeded \$1 million per year from the budget of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management and included two posts at the D-2 level, one at the D-1 level and one at the P-5 level, as well as one General Service staff member to be recruited by the President of the General Assembly.

The Department for General Assembly and Conference Management provided a wide range of assistance and services which include protocol service as well as translation and text processing services, depending on the language requirements of each presidency. From other Departments, the President was provided with a car and driver for official purposes and the office space. The Department of Safety and Security provided the President with a security detail, including during travel and in support of official functions.

The Office of Legal Affairs provided legal assistance.

The Secretariat has actively supported the Office in the form of human or financial resources, advised the Presidents-elect and facilitated the transition period from one session to the next, as well as providing a whole range of conference management and conference support services which benefited the Office. Significant assistance for the Office arrives from some Member States. The Secretariat and the Permanent Mission of Finland to the United Nations organize a retreat that brought together the incoming and outgoing presidencies, including the elected members of the General Committee with the goal of exchanging best practices and ideas.

Also, it is necessary to establish some kind of institutional cooperation between outgoing Presidents and their successors. Outgoing presidencies should submit an analytical report to their successors on lessons learned and outstanding items on the agenda. The *Ad Hoc* Working Group gave an interesting suggestion about the creation of a “permanent committee” within the Office to preserve institutional memory. The creation of permanent committees seems like a very good idea bearing in mind that the mandate of the President of the General Assembly and the Vice-President lasts only one year. For that reason, the Office of President of

the General Assembly requires some permanent body in order to ensure a quality and continuity of its work.

Resolutions of the UN General Assembly on Revitalization of the work of General Assembly have provided suggestions and proposal on strengthening the Office of the President of the General Assembly. Resolution 51/241 adopted by the General Assembly encourages the President of the General Assembly “to take appropriate opportunities to utilize the potential of the office of the President, consistent with the Charter and the mandates of the Assembly, to advance the purposes and principles of the Organization, including regular consultations between the President of the Assembly and the presidents of other organs, particularly the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council.” In order to assist the President in the discharge of his responsibilities, the General Assembly shall request the Secretary-General, after consultation with the President, to include in the next programme budget a proposal for adequate resources to be made available to the President, including, if necessary, through enhanced administrative and personnel support to the office of the President.

Resolution 55/285 adopted by the General Assembly emphasizes the importance of regular consultations and coordination between the President of the General Assembly and the Presidents of the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council and Secretary-General.

Criticism of the President of the General Assembly

Debates on the revitalization of UN General Assembly gave some serious criticism about the lack of power and inadequate working conditions of the Office of the President of the General Assembly.

Christian Wenaweser, the UN ambassador of Liechtenstein stated: “Given the importance of the position... it is quite remarkable that we do not pay more attention to the process of nominating and selecting our Presidents.” (...) “In some instances, a newly elected President ... was quite surprised to find out what the position actually entailed. The presidency is not a protocol function; it is a position of leadership and of political responsibility” (Volger, 2012).

Delegates pointed out that “we spend so much time selecting a Secretary-General, but we have absolutely no criteria for who the next PGA will be. ... It would be good if somebody had some experience in the UN beforehand – foreign minister, ambassador at the UN – somebody who would know where the hidden obstacles are” (Swart, 2008, p. 29). Noel Sinclair, then Deputy Chef de Cabinet of the Office of the President of the General Assembly noted that although the Charter describes the responsibilities of the GA, the role of the PGA “lacks a specific definition” (Jagtiani and Maresca, 2014).

POTENTIAL CHALLENGES FOR THE AD HOC WORKING GROUP

The General Assembly of the United Nations is faced with a serious crisis in its functioning. The crisis of the Assembly reflects on the Office of the President as well. It is very commendable that the *Ad Hoc* Working Group had recognized this issue as a separate cluster in the revitalization of the General Assembly. The revitalization discussions and resolutions have made some strides in improving the efficiency and the role of the President of the General Assembly. Many still see the General Assembly discussions as slow-moving and repetitive when it comes to the Strengthening the institutional memory of the Office of the President.

Besides, the *Ad Hoc* Working Group should consider some other issues related to the Office of the President of the General Assembly.

One of the most notable shortcomings of the Office of the President of the General Assembly is the temporally “unstable” character of the presidents and staff. Their mandate lasts only one year. The mandates of some other UN official last longer, for example, the mandate of the Secretary-General lasts four years. The *Ad Hoc* Working Group should consider the possibility to establish some permanent body at the Office of the President in order to increase efficiency and continuity of its work. Or, it should consider the possibility of a longer mandate for the President of the General Assembly.

Also, the *Ad Hoc* Working Group could consider mechanisms for adequate funding of the Office of the President. Lack of financial resources is one of the key problems for the Office. Establishment of the Trust fund for the Office in 2010 was a big step forward, but, so far, contributions to the fund are minimal.

Also, the *Ad Hoc* Working Group has to find some mechanisms to make the Office of the President of the General Assembly more visible. The role of the President is relatively unknown to the general public. All credit goes to the Secretary-General. Of course, it is a fact that the Secretary-General has much more visible administrative and political function. However, for the well-being of the General Assembly, it should exist more balance between the President of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General. The role and the personality of the President have to be more visible in the media.

Therefore, it is important to elect experienced diplomats for this function, as well as diplomats who have had previous experience with the United Nations system, or perhaps they have been the Ambassadors of their countries to the United Nations. Although the role of the President of General Assembly is a non-political, the functioning of the world’s greatest representative body depends on the personality and political abilities of its President.

CONCLUSION

Problems of the Office of the President of the General Assembly became a separate cluster on the 64th session. Unlike other three clusters, this cluster is relatively new. Same as other clusters, the strengthening of the Office of the President of the General Assembly is a slow-going process. Important improvements are not yet visible. So far, two concrete steps in the strengthening the Office happened in 1978 - when the number of Vice-Presidents had increased to 21; and in 2002- when the election of the President takes place three months before the beginning of its mandate.

The members of the United Nation understand the problems of the Office. The *Ad Hoc* Working group for the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly had defined major problems of the Office- lack of financial resources and lack of human resources. However, solutions to these problems are hard to find. Due to the financial crisis of the United Nations, the budget for the Office remained unchanged for almost two decades. On the other side, the lack of human resources was resolved with the assistance of other UN bodies. It would be unrealistic to expect that these problems of the Office of the President of the General Assembly will be resolved in the near future.

For the good sake of the General Assembly, an incoming President has to use transitional period of three months as a preparation for the role. Having in mind that the function of the President is not always strictly protocolary, the General Assembly has to elect experienced politicians and diplomats for this role. When it comes to lack of human resources, the Office should ask for help from the other UN bodies during the transitional period of three months. Also, for the continuity of the Office, the *Ad Hoc* Working Group should consider the establishment of a permanent organ within the Office of the President of General Assembly.

The whole revitalization of the General Assembly is a slow going process. Problematic issues have been recognized, but it lacks the political will for the change. So far, we can expect in distant future certain improvements in the Strengthening of the Institutional Memory of the Office of the President of General Assembly. However, for the process of revitalization of the General Assembly, the key solution is a reform of the United Nations.

REFERENCES

- Blavoukos, S. Bourantonis, D. (2011). *Chairing Multilateral Negotiations: The Case of the United Nations*. New York: Routledge.
- General Assembly. Functions and Powers of the General Assembly. Accessed July 14, 2017, from <http://www.un.org/en/ga/about/background.shtml>

- General Assembly of the United Nations. (19 December 1978). Resolution 33/138 Question of the composition of the relevant organs of the United Nations : Amendments to rules 31 and 38 of the Rules of procedure of the General Assembly. Accessed July 14, 2017, from <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/33/ares33r138.pdf>
- General Assembly of the United Nations. (22 August 1997). Resolution Adopted By The General Assembly [without reference to a Main Committee (A/51/24, para. 15)]51/241. Strengthening of the United Nations system. Accessed July, 04, 2017, from <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/51/ares51-241.htm>
- General Assembly of the United Nations. (10 September 2001). Resolution adopted by the General Assembly [without reference to a Main Committee (A/55/L.93)] 55/285. Revitalization of the General Assembly; improving the efficiency of the General Assembly. Accessed July 07, 2017, from <http://www.worldlii.org/int/other/UNGA/2001/53.pdf>
- General Assembly of the United Nations. (10 July 2002). Resolution adopted by the General Assembly [without reference to a Main Committee (A/56/L.80)] 56/509. Amendments to rules 30, 31 and 99 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. Accessed July 12, 2017, from http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/56/509
- General Assembly of the United Nations. (22 September 2015). Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 11 September 2015 [without reference to a Main Committee (A/69/1007)] 69/321. Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly. Accessed July 11, 2017, from http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/69/321
- Gross, L. (1984). *Essays on International Law and Organization*. Springer Science, Business Media B. V.
- Information Note - Office of the President of the General Assembly. Wednesday, 18 November 2015. Accessed July 06, 2017, from http://www.un.org/pga/70/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2015/11/Transparency_Information-Note.pdf
- Jagtiani, S., Maresca, A. (June 2014). Fourth Thematic Meeting of the 68th GA session in the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the General Assembly. Center for the UN Reform Education. Accessed July 15, 2017, from <http://centerforunreform.org/?q=node/619>
- Marecsca A. (21 January 2016). General Debate of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the General Assembly. Center For the UN Reform Education. Accessed June 30, 2017, from <http://www.centerforunreform.org/?q=node/694>
- Peterson, M. J. (2005). *The UN General Assembly*. London: Routledge.

- Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly (embodying amendments and additions adopted by the General Assembly up to September 2016). Accessed July 08, 2017, from http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/520/rev.18&Lang=E
- Swart, L. (2008). Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly. In: Perry, E. (ed.). *Managing Change at the United Nations* (pp. 21-36). New York: Center for UN Reform Education.
- United Nations General Assembly. Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly - Report of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly. 3 September 2015. Accessed July, 03, 2017, from http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/69/
- Volger, H. (29. May 2012). General Assembly President: A Hardly Noticed, Yet Crucial Job. *PassBlue Independent Coverage of the UN*. Accessed July 10, 2017, from <http://www.passblue.com/2012/05/29/general-assembly-president-a-hardly-noticed-yet-crucial-job/>
- Zafrulla Khan, M. (1964). The President of the General Assembly of the United Nations. *International Organization*. 18 (2), 231-240.

Jelica GORDANIĆ

JAČANJE KANCELARIJE PREDSEDNIKA GENERALNE SKUPŠTINE UJEDINJENIH NACIJA

Apstrakt. Pitanje Jačanja Kancelarije predsednika Generalne skupštine Ujedinjenih nacija postalo je posebna grupa u okviru revitalizacije rada Generalne skupštine na 64 zasedanju. Kancelarija predsednika Generalne skupštine se suočava sa brojnim poteškoćama, od kojih su najvažniji nedostatak finansijskih sredstava i nedovoljan broj osoblja Kancelarije. Funkcija predsednika Generalne skupštine je relativno nepoznata široj javnosti i oduvek je bila u senci funkcije Generalnog Sekretara. Rad analizira ulogu i nadležnosti predsednika Generalne skupštine, kao i rad i napredak Ad Hoc radne grupe za revitalizaciju rada Generalne skupštine po ovom pitanju. Određeni napredak je postignut, ali su najvažnija pitanja i dalje ostala nerešena.

Ključne reči: predsednik Generalne skupštine, revitalizacija, Generalna skupština, Ad Hoc radna grupa, Ujedinjene nacije.

Received: 16.07.2017

Revised: 29.08.2017

Accepted: 11.09.2017.