



**STATEMENT BY**

**THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
H.E. MR. JAN ELIASSON**

**ON**

**THE OCCASION OF THE ADOPTION OF THE  
OPTIONAL PROTOCOL TO THE CONVENTION  
ON THE SAFETY OF UNITED NATIONS AND  
ASSOCIATED PERSONNEL**

**UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS  
NEW YORK  
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Mr. Secretary-General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have reason to be proud and pleased that the General Assembly has now adopted the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel. I know that this outcome was made possible by the constructive and flexible way in which the Sixth Committee conducted its negotiations. I want to express particular thanks to Ambassador Christian Wenaweser, Permanent Representative of Liechtenstein, for his able leadership of the Ad Hoc Committee and Working Group in steering this matter to a successful conclusion.

Today's adoption of the Optional Protocol is an important step in the implementation of the 2005 World Summit Outcome. All of you who have worked on this Protocol have set a good example by the approach and spirit of your work. It is with a similar search for compromises and creative formulas that we can make rapid progress on other important elements of the World Summit follow-up.

Our main cause for celebration today is the Optional Protocol itself. Once entering into force, it will expand the scope of legal protection to additional categories of United Nations field operations. United Nations and associated personnel continue to face serious threats to their security – including hostage-taking, physical assault and robbery – as they discharge their duties around the world.

It is gratifying to note that with the concluded Optional Protocol the protection will now include United Nations operations conducted for the purpose of delivering humanitarian, political and development assistance in peacebuilding, and of delivering emergency humanitarian assistance.

We condemn those who perpetrate threats and acts of violence against United Nations and associated staff. We remain firm in our resolve to take all necessary action to deal with these threats and minimize the risks to our staff and associated personnel. This also includes strengthening the legal regime of United Nations protection.

I know from my experience of humanitarian field operations how important it is to have this Optional Protocol in place. When I was in Somalia as Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs in 1992, I saw for myself the dangers our staff face in their day-to-day work, despite our best efforts to protect them. Some of our colleagues died while trying to provide assistance.

The Optional Protocol will effectively help to protect and boost the morale of those United Nations and associated personnel who risk their lives to serve the vulnerable and the needy of the world. The Protocol will also be valuable as the Peacebuilding Commission begins its work.

As a next step, I strongly encourage all Member States to sign and ratify this Optional Protocol, as it opens for signature in January next year. I also encourage Member States who have yet to sign and ratify the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel, which is the basis for the Optional Protocol, to do so at the earliest opportunity.

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Before concluding, I would like to take this opportunity to comment on agenda item 108, “Measures to eliminate international terrorism”. I am gratified that a resolution on this very important and urgent topic was adopted today. The resolution serves to remind us of the challenge to the international community to deal with heinous acts of terrorism.

It is crucial for all of us to work together to try to end the current impasse in the negotiations of a comprehensive convention on international terrorism, so that we can conclude the convention as soon as possible. The resolution just adopted provides scope for the Ad Hoc Committee to report to the General Assembly upon completion of the comprehensive convention during the 60th session of the General Assembly.

I strongly encourage delegates to use this window of opportunity to continue working toward a conclusion on the Convention with a sense of urgency. A timely conclusion of work on the Convention will send a strong signal of the universal determination to confront the scourge of terrorism.

For my part, I will continue to work together with the Chairman of the Sixth Committee on this important matter, as well as on the issue of a counter-terrorism strategy, requested by the 2005 World Summit Outcome.

I know that the Secretariat is doing preparatory work on this issue. I intend to revert to you early next year on the counter-terrorism strategy after consultations with Member States and contacts with the Secretariat.