



**Remarks**

**by**

**H.E. Mr. John W. Ashe**

**President of the 68<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations**

**General Assembly**

**Event “United Nations pays tribute to Gabriel García Márquez”**

**New York**

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Excellencies,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to participate in this ceremony and honour one of the magnificent literary giants of our time.

When Gabriel Garcia Marquez passed away in April, we heard a chorus of moving tributes from all parts of the globe. There were fans who remarked how his work kept them company during difficult times; fellow writers who came forth describing his inspiration on their own creations; and readers disenfranchised by their governments who found hope and resonance in his message.

Marquez introduced us to the wonderful world of magical realism, in a way, it is argued, that no other writer has done before or since. He lives so strongly in our collective consciousness because his writing has an ageless human quality that touches the reader's emotions in a manner that transcends time, culture or nationality.

The writing of this renowned Columbian author, or Gabo as he was affectionately known, was revered by critics and devoured by readers all over the world. His most famous work, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, sold more than 50 million copies in 25 languages.

The high quality and universality of his writing were duly acknowledged in 1982 when he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature for [quote] "his novels and short stories, in which the fantastic and the realistic are combined in a richly composed world of imagination, reflecting a continent's life and conflicts". [end quote]

The beauty of Marquez's prose and the strength of his convictions are captured in the final words of his Nobel Acceptance Speech. He argued that the writers of the world, the so-called inventors of tales, are allowed to reinvent the pains of the past – to create [quote] "a new and sweeping utopia of life, where no one will be able to decide for others how they die, where love will prove true and happiness be possible, and where

the races condemned to one hundred years of solitude will have, at last and forever, a second opportunity on earth." [End quote].

As we commemorate this towering figure of world literature, we are at the same time engaging in our work to better the ills of the world with the crafting of a new development agenda. As we proceed, may we remember that all great ideas, plans and possibilities begin in the imagination, and may we balance our realism with the magic that keeps hope alive.

Thank you.

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