

2 December 2003

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Julian Robert Hunte,
President of the 58th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Announcement of the Awardees of the 2003 United Nations
Prize in the Field of Human Rights**

Good day, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today it is my honor as President of the General Assembly to announce the recipients of the quinquennial United Nations Prize in the Field of Human Rights for 2003.

This prestigious award is given to individuals and organizations in recognition of their outstanding contribution to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. This year there are five awardees, as well as a special posthumous award, which I will announce shortly.

This prize is awarded every five years, in accordance with a resolution of the General Assembly that was adopted in 1966. The prize was first awarded on 10 December 1968, the International Year for Human Rights and the twentieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The Prize provides an opportunity for the United Nations to publicly commend the achievements and outstanding contributions of the awardees. Through this public recognition of their valuable work, the United Nations also pays tribute to the thousands of anonymous human rights advocates and defenders involved daily in the difficult and often perilous work of promoting and protecting the rights of others.

In accordance with the GA resolution, the recipients of the Prize were selected by a Committee that consisted of:

- The President of the General Assembly,
- The President of the Economic and Social Council,
- The Chairperson of the Commission on Human Rights,
- The Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women, and
- The Chairperson of the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights.

The Committee met in New York with the assistance of the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights on 7 November 2003 to select the awardees from among some 50 nominations received in accordance with the established rules.

The Prize will be awarded at the plenary meeting of the General Assembly at UN Headquarters in New York on Human Rights Day, 10 December 2003 at 10am. The awardees have been invited to attend the General Assembly meeting to be presented with a commemorative plaque, and to attend a number of official functions.

It is now my great honor to announce, as President of the General Assembly and Chairman of the special selection committee, the recipients of the United Nations Prize in the Field of Human Rights for 2003.

The awardees are:

Ms. Enriqueta Estela Barnes de Carlotto of Argentina for her work as the President of the Asociación Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo [Association of Plaza de Mayo Grandmothers]. This association was established in 1977 in response to the forced or involuntary disappearance of hundreds of children following the military coup in Argentina in 1976 when children were either abducted with their parents, or born in clandestine detention centers for young pregnant women. Since then, Ms. Barnes de Carlotto and the Association have located missing and kidnapped children and restored them to their rightful families.

Mr. Deng Pufang of China, who is the founder and director of the China Disabled Persons' Federation, which he established in 1988 to act as an international advocate for the rights of persons with disabilities. As a result of his initiatives and advocacy, the living standards and status of persons with disabilities in China has significantly improved. Disabled by a spinal injury in 1968, Mr. Deng earned a reputation during the ensuing years as an advocate of disabled people in China and around the world. His many years of tireless effort to promote the human rights of the disabled in China through legislation, programmes and activities, is exemplary.

The Family Protection Project Management Team of Jordan which is a groundbreaking initiative that has helped to lift the taboo on the subject of domestic violence, and promote open debate on issues of human rights and gender equality. A team of seven men and five women, representing both governmental and non-governmental organizations, has been responsible for the development and implementation of the project, which takes a truly holistic, preventative and inclusive approach to tackling the root causes of domestic violence. The Team has also developed a social justice partnership model to address domestic violence in countries of the region, and may provide a useful learning experience for countries around the world.

Ms. Shulamith Koenig of the United States of America, who is the Executive Director of the People's Movement for Human Rights Education, which she founded in 1988 with the goal of creating a global human rights culture. To this end Ms. Koenig has:

- Advocated global action for societal change through human rights education.
- Worked tirelessly to support the United Nations Decade of Human Rights Education;
- Organized consultations and workshops with educators, human rights advocates and community leaders in more than 60 countries; and

- Initiated the 'Human Rights Cities' project, now supported by UNDP as a three-year Global Program to be implemented in 30 cities and train 500 young community leaders in strengthening human rights, civil society and democracy.

The Mano River Women's Peace Network in West Africa, which is a network of women's organizations from Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea. It was established in May 2000 to contribute to the search for regional peace and security through advocacy; conflict prevention and resolution; and peace building. The network has brought an effective multi-dimensional, coordinated and regional approach to the struggle for human rights through initiatives to restore peace and to ensure that women's voices are included at all levels of the decision-making process. It has been active at both the grass roots level and the highest levels of government, successfully bringing the Heads of State of their three countries back to the negotiating table in 2001, and as a delegate, mediator and signatory to the Liberian peace talks in August 2003.

Finally, the special committee has decided that a special posthumous award will be given to: The late UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello of Brazil, who held many other high level positions within the United Nations, including most recently, Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Iraq. He served the UN cause relentlessly for more than thirty years, and as you would be aware, was killed on duty in Iraq along with 21 others, on 19 August 2003.

Thank you.