

23 June 2004

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Julian Robert Hunte,
President of the 58th Session of the General Assembly,
on the Occasion of United Nations Public Service Day ceremony**

Excellencies, Delegates, United Nations Public Service Awardees, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Today, United Nations Public Service Day, we celebrate the men and women worldwide who have answered their countries' call to Public Service, and have taken up the significant challenge that such service brings.

In designating this day, 23 June annually, as United Nations Public Service Day, the United Nations General Assembly underscores the essential role of the Public Service in implementing the policies and programmes government set to meet their goals and objectives at the national, regional and international levels. Undoubtedly this United Nations initiative serves as a catalyst for the celebration of Public Service Day around the world.

We have given Public Service Day 2004 a specific context - the landmark Millennium Declaration adopted by Heads of State and Government at the 2000 Millennium Summit. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) capture the essence of the courses of action to which Heads of State and Government agreed in the Declaration. Together with the commitments made in more than a decade of United Nations summits and conferences in the economic and social fields, the MDGs address the myriad challenges that confront states, particularly in the developing world, in this twenty-first century.

These are, to be sure, turbulent times. Dramatic events in one country or group of countries can have significant impact in countries the world over. Globalisation and trade liberalization, underpinned by rapid advances in technology and communications have become the principal driving forces in the global economy. But many countries, particularly in the developing world, have not reaped a benefit. Indeed, some are worse off.

To inequity in the global economic system - and some would say exacerbated by it - poverty, degradation of the environment, the ravages of diseases such as HIV/AIDS and other serious global problems continue to command the attention of governments. At the same time, the 0.7% official development assistance target continues to be elusive for most, while energy and resources seem more focused on conflict and war in progress, than to development and other interventions that might avoid them.

It is countries, developed and developing that have a primary responsibility for promoting their own development. This includes implementing policies and programmes for the alleviation of

poverty and hunger, to achieve primary education and equality of men and women, to combat deadly diseases and to meet these and other objectives of the MDGs. The MDGs do focus us, rightly, on the need to develop partnerships for development. But it is a competent, knowledgeable and experienced Public Service, I submit, that helps to provide the policy and a strategic impetus and environment in which all actors can play their essential role in delivering the MDGs and other development strategies to improve the lives of people around the world. In other words, nations need their Public Services for the achievement of their development goals, including those agreed in the Millennium Declaration.

Continuity and change both rest in the hands of the Public Service. Continuity may require that various procedures and processes be kept in place, some in the short-term, and others in the long term. Continuity, however, should never stand as an impediment to the fresh perspectives, innovation and creativity required to respond effectively to the new demands of a rapidly changing world. The General Assembly recognized this.

In designating 23 June as United Nations Public Service Day, the General Assembly spoke clearly to the need to revitalize the Public Service. The Assembly's call to restore the virtue and values of dedicated service to the public, and for integrity, professionalism, sensitivity, transparency and accountability is a call, I am sure, that we all support. These attributes are our best hope that our efforts for socio-economic development would succeed.

The need to attract, develop, motivate and retain the best talent, to promote integrity and pride in dedicated and committed service, and to recognize that service, I am certain, does have the strong support of Member States and this United Nations. This is evident today in our recognition of the best in the Public Service from countries, developed and developing, around the world, as part of our Public Service Day celebration.

Today, we recognize those who have progressively opened doors, to make the Public Service more visible. Through their efforts, the citizens of the world are better served; equity is promoted by ensuring access to services, particularly by vulnerable groups; emphasis has been placed on timeliness and courtesy; transparency in decision-making, professionalism and accountability have been forthcoming, to citizens, clients and other stakeholders; methodologies and approaches to work are now a radical departure from "business as usual", producing good results, lowering costs and enhancing the quality of service; new information and communications technology has been embraced and have improved service delivery; government operations have been re-engineered; and interaction between public officials and the public at all levels of society has been promoted and improved.

I commend you, the recipients of the United Nations Public Service Awards, for your exemplary efforts to improve the delivery of public services. I commend you for your efforts that contribute to the achievements of the MDGs. I encourage you to continue on the path of public service, in the interest of the socio-economic development of your countries and of international cooperation.

Let me also take this opportunity to recognize the United Nations Secretariat for its cooperation, which has been essential to ensuring that letter and spirit of the General Assembly's decision to establish Public Service Awards is effectively implemented.

I believe that our countries and societies owe much to the men and women of the Public Service. On this day dedicated to the Public Service, it is incumbent upon us all, Member States, the United Nations system, other intergovernmental organizations and civil society, to provide the cooperation and support that would ensure that the service can deliver on national development goals and agreed international goals, including the MDGs.

I thank you.