

24 January 2005

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Jean Ping,
President of the 59th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Commemoration of the 60th Anniversary of the Liberation of
the Nazi Concentration Camps**

Sixty years ago, at the conclusion of the appalling Second World War, which claimed more than 100 million victims, the terrified world learned of the horrors of the Nazi concentration camps.

Today, we meet to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation by the allied forces of those odious death camps, where millions of human beings - Jews and other innocent victims - were despicably murdered by reason of their ethnic origins, religious beliefs, ideas or political commitments.

Our Assembly therefore welcomes the holding today, 24 January 2005, of a special session that is both historic and symbolic. It is historic because it marks the very first time that the General Assembly has held a special session to commemorate an event. It is symbolic because, through this session, the international community can finally exorcise, together, the tragedy of the Holocaust and, further, express its firm will to condemn tyranny and barbarism to eternal failure, wherever they may arise.

I should like to commend the initiative of the Member States that called for the convening of this twenty-eighth special session.

I pay a solemn tribute to the survivors of the Holocaust, among whom is Nobel Prize laureate Elie Wiesel, as well as to the courageous veterans of the allied forces of the Second World War, including Mr. Brian Urquhart, former Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations. They do us the great honour of attending today in this house of nations and the peoples of the world.

They are the precious witnesses to that bleak page in the history of humankind, from which, sadly, we have not always been able to learn our due lessons. Suffice it to recall all the instances of genocide, crimes against humanity and other mass violations of human rights that have occurred since 1945 on the five continents. Above all, they are the living symbols of the very foundations of the United Nations, built on the ashes of horror and tyranny to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. Their presence therefore honours us in numerous ways.

There could be no more timely moment to hold this session, which has been convened precisely at a time when our Organization is engaged in an intensive reform process designed to prepare us better to cope with the myriad challenges and threats to collective security confronting our world today. It is therefore our moral obligation to act unconditionally to preserve what has been called the "duty of memory" regarding one of the most appalling crimes in the history of humankind.

However, while the duty of memory is an indispensable bastion against the temptation to forget, it must also carry us towards the future. This special session also provides us with an opportunity once again to state loud and clear "Never again!" and to reaffirm our dedication to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter.

Our world and our consciences must never again accommodate the arbitrary will that indiscriminately snuffs out innocent lives because of their differences. Because we live in a world that is richer for our respective differences, and because the inalienable right to life is one of the universal values on which our humanity is based, the duty of memory must also go hand in hand with the duty of solidarity.

It is in that respect that I associate myself with the forceful and eloquent statement of Mr. Elie Wiesel that we do not suffer alone, but that we always suffer with those who suffer because of our suffering. May our legitimate dedication to our respective identities always draw sustenance from our shared humanity.

Thank you.