



17 September 2007

Excellency,

It gives me pleasure to write to you one last time to highlight the major achievements of the 61<sup>st</sup> session of the General Assembly.

Member States worked diligently throughout the session to advance the United Nations agenda, and to further strengthen our Organization and its General Assembly. I have worked throughout the year to promote the reform agenda of the United Nations and to restore the trust and confidence among its Membership, in order to build the necessary consensus to advance our common goals, as well as to enhance the authority of the General Assembly – the chief deliberative, policy making organ of the United Nations.

We held numerous meetings, both formal and informal, in an open, transparent and inclusive manner. I am convinced that this is the only way to avoid any misperceptions that may occur and to achieve the consensus we all aspire for.

The achievements of the membership during this session are a testimony to what we can accomplish collectively if there is the political will to realize our common purpose.

The theme of the 61<sup>st</sup> session was the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. Throughout the year, I have attempted, to the extent possible, to advance this objective through innovative means, taking into account that we have reached the midpoint for the achievement of the MDGs. For the first time, the

General Assembly held four substantive informal thematic debates addressing some of the key challenges we face today.

These high level meetings brought together Member States, Civil Society, NGOs, and in most instances, the Private Sector.

The first thematic debate was held on 27 November 2006 entitled "*Partnerships towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals: Taking stock, moving forward*". Our common objective was to give impetus to the implementation of MDGs, by providing a forum to examine practical measures and strategies that would deliver tangible results.

The debate brought together donor and recipient countries as well as civil society, including entities from non-governmental organizations and the private sector, who shared their successful experiences and new approaches. The debate was also a platform for the Islamic Development Bank to announce a US\$10 billion dollar fund for the eradication of poverty and financing for the MDGs.

A follow-up meeting to the debate entitled "*Financing Development to achieve the Millennium Development Goals*" took place in Doha, Qatar on 17 and 18 June 2007, under the co-chairmanship of the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Qatar and myself.

The second debate, was on the "*Promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women*", on 7 and 8 March 2007. The debate provided an opportunity to share views, best practices and lessons learned to better promote gender equality; to discuss how to bridge the gaps between policy and practice; and, to renew political commitments towards full implementation of existing agreements.

The third thematic debate was entitled "*Civilizations and the Challenge for Peace: obstacles and opportunities*", on 10 and 11 May 2007. The objective of the event was to explore the reasons behind the growing level of mistrust between peoples of different religions and cultures and to examine how and why cultural and religious differences increasingly fuel, and are used to justify, conflicts. A number of prominent commentators, academics and political figures participated in four separate panel discussions over two days.

The fourth was on "*Climate Change as a global challenge*", on 31 July, 1 and 2 August. The main objective of the debate was to raise awareness and provide a forum to discuss the growing scientific consensus on climate change. The debate provided delegations with additional impetus for action that may be used during the Secretary General's High Level Event on 24 September 2007, as well as for the preparations for the Bali Conference in December this year.

I once again wish to thank all Member States for their support and active participation at these important events. I particularly would like to thank those Member States and organizations that have provided financial support.

**On the reform of the United Nations**, we began the 61<sup>st</sup> session by adopting by consensus a resolution on 20 November 2006, on the **Strengthening the Economic and Social Council**. This was finalized after 14 months of negotiations. I would like to thank the Co-Chairs, Ambassador Verbeke of Belgium and Ambassador Diarra the former Permanent Representative of Mali, for their tireless work in leading this process. The resolution mandates the regular convening of a new Development Cooperation Forum, to better achieve our international development goals, and it will provide for quicker responses to humanitarian emergencies.

I am also very proud that we have succeeded in adopting a new system for the **Administration of Justice** on 4 April 2007. This resolution addresses the many major concerns conveyed to me by the Staff of the United Nations. There is however more work to be done to develop this independent, transparent and adequately resourced System for the 55,000 staff of the UN Secretariat, Funds and Programmes, which will come into effect 1 January 2009. I trust the Fifth and Sixth Committees will continue their discussions on the details of the System in the 62<sup>nd</sup> Session.

**On Management and Secretariat reform**, the Fifth Committee adopted a resolution to operationalize the Independent Audit Advisory Committee. This is a major step forward to enhance oversight across the Organization.

In addition, we adopted two resolutions, one on the Strengthening of the capacity of the Organization in Peacekeeping Operations and the other on the Strengthening of the capacity of the Organization to advance the disarmament agenda.

**On Mandate Review**, the Co-Chairs, Ambassador Mbuende of Namibia and Ambassador Cooney former Permanent Representative of Ireland, have conducted consultations on this essential aspect of the reform process with a view to updating the programme of work of the Organization.

The informal Working Group met three times this Session to consider mandates in the thematic clusters, namely: drug control, crime prevention, and combating international terrorism. The General Assembly adopted a decision to continue consultations at the 62<sup>nd</sup> session on how to move this process forward. I am confident that the membership will continue working to update the programme of work of our Organization.

**On System-wide Coherence**, we are well underway on the integrated intergovernmental process of considering the report of the Secretary-General that was issued on 16 April 2007. I appreciate the efforts of the Co-Chairs, Ambassador Hackett of Barbados and Ambassador Hoscheit of Luxembourg, in steering the consultations on this important matter in terms of procedure and substance. I trust that Member States will take concrete action on these important issues in the next session, especially on strengthening the capabilities of the United Nations in the area of gender equality and empowerment of women. Gender equality and the empowerment of women is not merely an issue that we need to take action on to achieve the MDGs, it is a core component of the human rights agenda as contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the constitutions of all Member States. Proposals in this regard are before the Member States. It is now imperative to act.

**On International Environmental Governance**, the Co-Chairs, Ambassador Heller of Mexico and Ambassador Maurer of Switzerland have finalized comprehensive consultations and issued an Options Paper on 14 June 2007. The Co-Chairs held further consultations and received substantive comments from Member States on the Options Paper as well as the way forward in the 62<sup>nd</sup> session. I sincerely appreciate the contributions that all Member States have made to this important process.

**On Revitalization of the General Assembly**, the two Co-Chairs, Ambassador Bodini of San Marino and Ambassador Badji of Senegal, have conducted consultations with Member States on the most preferred format for taking this issue forward. A Resolution on “Revitalization of the role and authority of the General Assembly and strengthening its performance” was adopted on 2 August 2007. The Resolution formally establishes an *ad hoc* working group on GA revitalization, at the 62<sup>nd</sup> session of the GA. Its role will be to “evaluate and assess the status of implementation

of relevant resolutions, to identify ways to further enhance the role, authority, effectiveness and efficiency of the General Assembly, inter alia, by building on previous resolutions, and to submit a report thereon to the General Assembly.”

Throughout the year, I forged good relationships with the Presidents of the Security Council. In this context, at the invitation of the Foreign Minister of Slovakia, I delivered a statement at the thematic debate of the Security Council on 20 February 2007 on Security Sector Reform. I have also accepted the invitation of the Foreign Minister of Belgium to address the Council, on 25 June 2007, on the issue of natural resources and conflict. Finally, on 28 August 2007, Ambassador Merores of Haiti delivered a statement on my behalf on Conflict Prevention as per the invitation of the President of the Council for the month of August, the Permanent Representative of the Congo.

In the context of **the relationship between the General Assembly and global constituencies**, I am also pleased to inform you that, with a view to enhancing the dialogue between the General Assembly and civil society, we convened an interactive forum with Member States and NGOs in November 2006, in partnership with the UN Foundation. We also held periodic briefings on the various tracks of UN Reform processes, as well as other matters of interest. Furthermore, civil society stakeholders were invited to participate in the four thematic debates of the General Assembly.

**On Security Council Reform**, after extensive consultations with Member States, the five facilitators, Ambassador Hachani former Permanent Representative of Tunisia, Ambassador Majoor of the Netherlands, Ambassador Mavroyiannis of Cyprus, Ambassador Mladineo of Croatia, and Ambassador Muñoz of Chile, produced a report on 19 April 2007, on “The Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security

Council and Other Matters relating to the Security Council". The report outlined a way to move forward on this important issue.

Following that report, Ambassador Wenaweser of Liechtenstein and Ambassador Muñoz of Chile continued consultations with all Member States and submitted a complementary report which was circulated to Member States on 26 June 2007.

The Open Ended Working Group on Security Council Reform was revitalized during this session as reflected in the number of meetings it held as well as in the depth of the discussions that took place. The OEWG adopted its report after lengthy consultations. It is evident that this sensitive issue should not be a divisive one. We all agree that reforming the Security Council is necessary in order to enhance the legitimacy of its decisions and ensure its effectiveness. I am hopeful that the membership will continue its work on this issue to advance the process, including through intergovernmental negotiations, so that progress can be achieved in the 62<sup>nd</sup> session on the basis of what we have accomplished in the 61<sup>st</sup> session, as well as on the positions of and proposals made by Member States.

In the area of **International Peace and Security**, the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy was launched on 19 September 2006. The strategy marks the first time that Member States agree to a common strategic approach and a plan of action to fight terrorism. In February 2007, I chaired an informal briefing of the General Assembly when the Secretary-General briefed Member States on the implementation of the Strategy as well as the launch of the Online Handbook on Counter-terrorism.

The Sixth Committee and the Ad Hoc Committee on Terrorism are continuing their work in order to finalize a comprehensive convention on international terrorism as soon as possible. I received briefings throughout the session from Ambassador

Perrera of Sri Lanka, Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Terrorism, and Ms. Maria Telalian of Greece, Vice-chair of the Ad Hoc Committee, on the progress of negotiations.

The General Assembly held a plenary debate to consider the role and effectiveness of the **Peacebuilding Commission**, and to mark the first anniversary of its establishment.

I am very proud that we succeeded in our fundraising efforts for the **Peacebuilding Fund** this year due to the contribution of numerous Member States. We need to continue building more momentum in the next session.

**On the codification of International Law**, in December 2006, the Assembly adopted two landmark conventions; **the Convention on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities** on 13 December 2006, and the **International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance**, on 20 December 2006. By these two important instruments, Member States have committed to promoting and protecting the human rights, freedoms and dignity of all persons with disabilities, as well as help prevent enforced disappearances and provide "justice" for the victims and their families.

The Assembly also adopted **the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**, on 13 September 2007. I would like to thank Ambassador Davide, Jr. of the Philippines, for his tireless efforts in undertaking lengthy consultations on this matter. It is the product of over two decades of negotiations.

These achievements are major steps forward towards protecting and promoting the human rights and fundamental freedoms for all. Their adoption also reasserts the role of the General Assembly in



the process of norm-setting and the codification of international law.

I also, presided over a historic change in the leadership of the United Nations when **Mr. Ban Ki-Moon** was sworn in as the eighth Secretary-General of this Organization. Over the past year, I have developed a close working relationship with him to better align Member States' interests with that of the United Nations and to more effectively deliver on our shared programme of work.

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In additions to the aforementioned achievements, the Assembly has adopted a new **Scale of Assessment** for 2007-2009, as well as the **Capital Master Plan**, to begin the renovation of the UN Headquarters complex in New York.

We also laid the groundwork for three important high-level meetings scheduled to take place in the 62nd session:

- *the High-level Dialogue on Interreligious and Intercultural Understanding and Cooperation for Peace*, which will be held on 4 and 5 October 2007, including the interactive hearing with civil society on 4 October;
- *the High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development*, which will be held on 22 and 23 October 2007; and will lead to the preparation for *the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus* in Doha at the end of 2008; preparatory consultations were Co-Chaired by Ambassador Løvald of Norway and Ambassador Abdelaziz of Egypt.
- and, *the Commemorative High-level plenary meeting devoted to the follow-up to the special session on children*, scheduled

for 11 and 12 December 2007; preparatory consultations were facilitated by Ambassador Dapkiunas of Belarus.

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Regarding my **official travels**, in late February and early March 2007, I visited both Italy and Germany. In Italy, I met with the Pope, the President of the Republic of Italy, the Prime Minister as well as the Foreign Minister and a number of senior government and UN officials. I also addressed the Italian Senate. I took this opportunity to visit the UN Logistics Base in Brindisi as well as the Headquarters for the United Nations Agencies in Rome. In Germany, I met with the Foreign Minister and Minister of Economic Cooperation and Development.

In the latter half of March, I visited Morocco and Kuwait and held high level meetings with Government officials including the Emir of Kuwait and the Heads of both Governments as well as the Foreign Ministers and other senior officials. I then traveled to Saudi Arabia, where I addressed the Arab Summit on the work of the General Assembly. This was the first time that a President of the General Assembly has addressed the Arab Summit.

Last May, at the invitation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Austria, I participated in an international conference on 'Women Leaders: Networking for Peace and Security in the Middle East', on 31 May 2007. The conference was co-chaired by the Secretary of State of the United States of America. The meeting was attended by ministers and senior government officials from all over the world. I also visited the UN Headquarters in Vienna as well as UN agencies based there and held bilateral meetings with government officials in Austria.

In early June 2007, I visited Spain at the invitation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. I held bilateral talks with government officials; and delivered a statement before the Spanish Senate entitled "Towards a Culture of Gender Equality in the 21st Century". At the end of June I embarked on an official visit to the People's Republic of China to address the Tenth International Meeting of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions (IAESCSI). I met with high-level government officials, including the Prime Minister of China and the Foreign Minister as well as NGOs representing women's interests.

In early July 2007, I visited Switzerland, Turkey and Tunisia. In Geneva, I addressed the Opening Session of the High Level Segment of the Economic and Social Council in the wake of the adoption of the General Assembly Resolution on Strengthening the Council. I also addressed the Global Compact Leaders Summit. I then visited Turkey at the invitation of the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister to address the United Nations Ministerial Conference of the Least Developed Countries "Making Globalization Work for LDCs". At the end of my tour I visited Tunisia upon the invitation of the Foreign Minister and met with the President of the Republic and other senior government officials.

Excellency,

Finally, I would like to extend my appreciation to all delegations for their cooperation and support. My experiences over the past year indicate that we all firmly believe in multilateralism despite the suspicions and at times the mistrust. You have all repeatedly demonstrated that you can rise above your national interests in the service of our collective objectives. It is clear that when we stand united, we are stronger, when we pursue our common goals with purpose, the General Assembly makes a real difference.

The challenge before you now is to continue to build on the hard work and accomplishments of the 61<sup>st</sup> session so that we can further improve the effectiveness of the United Nations which is at the heart of the multilateral system. This is the collective responsibility of all Member States.

I can leave this Organization knowing that it is in good hands and that I have discharged my responsibilities as the President of the 61<sup>st</sup> session of the General Assembly by giving my all to serve the values and principles of the United Nations. For this honour, privilege and opportunity I am deeply grateful to all Member States.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.



Haya Rashed Al Khalifa