

22 May 2008

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Srgjan Kerim,
President of the 62nd Session of the General Assembly,
at the Opening of the Thematic Debate on Human security**

Your Royal Highness,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to welcome you all to the General Assembly thematic debate that for the first time is devoted to the issue of human security.

I would like to give a special welcome to His Royal Highness Prince El-Hassan Bin Talal of Jordan who is joining us here today. My thanks go to Member States who provided a valuable support in laying the ground for this debate.

I invite you to exchange views on the scope of human security, its significance for the challenges we are facing today and for the work of the United Nations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the 2005 World Summit, Heads of State and Government committed themselves to further discussing the notion of human security in the General Assembly. Member States recognized that “all individuals, in particular, vulnerable people, are entitled to freedom from fear and freedom from want, with an equal opportunity to enjoy all their rights and fully develop their human potential.” Today’s thematic debate builds upon this commitment and provides an opportunity to reflect further on the issue.

The interface between security, development and human rights lies at the core of human security. The profound interlink among these three pillars of the United Nations system and policies has been recognized by Member States. By promoting the idea of an integrated and coordinated approach to security, proponents of human security have further underscored this interdependence.

The human security approach surpasses the understanding of security beyond state security and calls for a holistic approach focused on people, their protection and empowerment.

The United Nations, because of its global efforts to advance security, development and human rights, is a particularly important nexus in further evolving the notion of human security that puts positive peace, not the mere absence of conflict, at the heart of the understanding of security.

Contemporary challenges pose a threat to human security and thus highlight the need for comprehensive, integrated and people-centred solutions. These challenges range from hunger, poverty, to armed conflicts, human trafficking, environmental degradation, international terrorism and breaches of human rights of all kind.

These are also the very issues we have on the top of our agenda in the General Assembly. They are intrinsically linked with the implementation of the MDGs, as one of the priorities for this 62nd session.

The Security Council is nowadays also debating thematic issues that have an impact on human security, such as children in armed conflict, terrorism and “women, peace and security”.

The issues that human security is concerned about are listed under different agenda items in the UN. However, it is for us to understand and tackle them in their totality and interconnectedness. It is in this regard that human security could become a very useful concept to provide the link, the glue to bring our various approaches to those issues into a coherent effort.

Human security seeks to protect people from such threats and to promote goals endorsed by the UN World Summit: “freedom from fear,” “freedom from want” as well as “freedom to live in dignity”.

With people’s insecurities interconnected there is an urgent need to bring policies and institutions together in a far more effective way than if such responses are fragmented. As the global food crisis illustrates, a well-coordinated and integrated response by the international community is needed to address both the prevention stage as well as the full range of factors that affect people’s well-being.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I note with appreciation the work that has been done so far to advance the agenda of human security. In practice, the concept of human security is reflected in its organizational development, and in a number of concrete projects carried out by the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, Member States and UN agencies, funds and programmes as well as the Human Security Network.

The United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security has invested in over 170 projects worldwide. Its projects provide concrete and sustainable help to people and communities whose survival, livelihood, and dignity are threatened.

Member States are seeking to promote human security through a number of projects and initiatives. As a follow-up to the 2005 Summit, an open-ended forum composed of Member States from all regions called the Friends of Human Security was set up. The forum seeks to promote an understanding of human security, to mainstream human security in UN activities, and to pursue collaborative efforts among Member States. The group of friends submitted a

compendium of human security related initiatives and activities by members of the Friends of Human Security and United Nations agencies, funds and programmes.

A network of Member States, the Human Security Network emphasizes the added value of human security in the UN and other multilateral frameworks. It focuses on different issues that threaten the well-being of people, such as climate change, abject poverty, health pandemics, protection of children, armed conflicts, and landmines.

Let me emphasize that lasting results at the crossroads of security, development and human rights can only be achieved through a collaborative effort: by bringing together Member States, international organizations, UN agencies as well as civil societies and NGO's. All these stakeholders have to work hand in hand if we want to protect, engage and empower the ones whose human security is in peril.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We've recently witnessed two major natural catastrophes: the cyclone Nargis in Myanmar and the earthquake in the southwest regions of China. My sympathies lie with the many thousands of victims of these catastrophes.

The aftermath of the Myanmar natural disaster evokes myriad of challenges for the international community. We must do everything in our power to provide humanitarian assistance to these so severely affected communities. There should be no impediments with implications for human security in such and similar cases.

The global food crisis is another pressing issue that endangers the well-being of hundreds of millions, particularly but not exclusively the poorest and most vulnerable.

The recent natural catastrophes and the global food crisis illustrate the urgent need for a multi-faceted, integrated and co-ordinated response. Human security is the vehicle and the framework that enables us to provide such response.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my personal view that we need a new culture of international relations -- with the precept of human security at its core. Such a culture, though intrinsically embedded in the UN's ideals, was never truly enacted in practice. In our ever-more interdependent world it's more important than ever before that we embrace and enact principles of human security, international law and multilateral cooperation, human rights, responsibility to protect as well as protection of the environment and sustainable development.

When in January 1941 Franklin D. Roosevelt addressed the United States Congress, he spoke of freedoms that the world should be founded upon. He spoke of freedom of speech and expression, freedom from want and freedom from fear -- everywhere and anywhere in the world. He saw

these freedoms not as “vision of a distant millennium”, but rather as a “definite basis for a kind of world attainable” in his own time and generation. They became the very foundation of the United Nations.

Six decades later, at the end of the first decade of that distant millennium, these freedoms and the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, are still very much a distant vision for too much of humanity.

I am looking forward to hearing your views on how human security can contribute to UN’s efforts to attaining these freedoms and thus to the better world for all.

In closing, it is my hope that this debate will add momentum to our discussions on human security, address contentious issues and also provide guidance and clarity as to how to proceed in our future deliberations to further develop this important concept.

Thank you for your attention.