

9 September 2008

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Srgjan Kerim,
President of the 62nd Session of the General Assembly,
at the Symposium on Supporting Victims of Terrorism**

Mr. Secretary-General
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Friends

I thank the Secretary-General for convening this symposium and for the invitation to address it; I think it is a timely and very important initiative.

I welcome all of you here and thank you for coming together to listen to and share experiences in this area. It is precisely the broader nature of this discussion – encompassing Member States as well as individuals who have personal experience with terrorism and experts – that makes it so beneficial.

On Friday 5 September 2008, the General Assembly unanimously adopted the resolution marking the first review of implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which Member States had endorsed two years ago as the first ever truly global comprehensive tool to tackle this menace.

Member States were ready to put aside their political differences, ready to rise above ongoing debates on the definition of terrorism and agree on practical, operational steps that needed to be taken and could be taken collectively as well as individually.

It was precisely the human suffering, the senseless violence, the haunting stare of victims that spurred us to action.

The cowardly terrorist acts not only seek to create an atmosphere of fear, but they directly affect the lives of so many. Terrorists target innocent civilians to attain their goals, seeking to impose their will over others. The sinister nature of a terrorist act lies precisely in its malicious intent towards innocent victims: the more terrorist inflict suffering and damage, the greater they regard their gain.

One of the commitments we made in the Strategy was to strive to promote international solidarity in support of victims and foster the involvement of civil society in a global campaign against terrorism and for its condemnation. We also expressed our wish to put in place national systems

of assistance that would promote the needs of victims and their families and facilitate the normalization of their lives.

The implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy has been one of the main priorities of my tenure as President of the General Assembly.

In the Resolution we adopted last Friday, we not only renewed our firm commitment in our Strategy, but also expressed our common will to continue and further advance on its implementation.

It is important that the Strategy, as the United Nations global attempt to agree on a set of comprehensive measures for countering terrorism, has put an emphasis on victims of terrorism. It was we, the Member States that expressed this profound imperative.

Today we come to pay honour to that call in the Strategy at a global level, complementing action that has been taken already at regional and national levels. We must do justice to this effort and to those gathered here today, who provide a courageous example of the suffering of so many thousands of our country men and women.

How should the international community express its solidarity?

First and foremost, we must unequivocally and continuously condemn all acts of terrorism, irrespective of their motivation. We must not leave any doubt that these acts are criminal and reprehensible.

We must recognize the importance of sharing national experiences and successes in our efforts to counter terrorism and must use the convening and harmonizing power of the United Nations in this regard.

Today, we will benefit from examples across regions and contexts.

As President of the General Assembly, it is my hope and conviction that we take the opportunity to learn from one another about supporting victims of terrorism, starting here today.

As a human being, I am humbled by the courage of those who will share their experiences as victims with us.

On behalf of my Member State colleagues, I express our deepest support and gratitude to you. It is my hope that in raising your voices, needs and views, you find empowerment and that in meeting with one another and with the Member States and others present here you form useful connections.

I have confidence that today's meeting marks the beginning of our greater action and continued dialogue on solidarity with and support to victims of terrorism.

It is our duty and privilege to build on the discussions here today and on insights gained and shared, taking further steps in this area.

I thank you.