

15 December 2008

**Statement of Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann,
President of the 63rd Session of the General Assembly,
at the Human Rights Day Concert**

Thank you, Mr. Akasaka.
Señora Vice Presidente de España (María Terésa Fernández de la Vega),
Mr. Barenboim,
Excellencies,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Dear Friends,
Brothers and Sisters,

I welcome you all to this great hall to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This Magna Carta inspires the entire human family with a compelling vision of our shared rights and responsibilities, and guides the work of the United Nations as well. And I welcome a great musician and United Nations Messenger of Peace, Daniel Barenboim, to this hall once again. He comes as an emissary of a noble musical experiment, what he refers to as “the sovereign independent republic of West-Eastern Divan”. We are honoured to give him a seat in this assembly of nations.

As people around the world have commemorated the Universal Declaration over the past week, one message is constantly repeated: After decades of hard work, we have a powerful and inclusive body of international human rights law; now we must focus our undivided attention to its universal implementation.

There are forces in the world that see these laws as quaint fairy tales that are mere distractions in the more important pursuits of power, wealth and domination. Our task is to ensure that respect for human rights become deeply ingrained in our cultures, not just on Saturday or Sunday, but every day of the week.

This requires the strengthening of an all-pervasive culture of peace, respect, and, as Daniel emphasizes so often, of equality among people. This requires that we draw on the deep reservoirs of good will and courage within each one of us to speak out and assert these values in our daily lives. The daily life of business and government is no exception.

When Daniel Barenboim and Eduard Said, the late Palestinian scholar and rights activist, founded the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra almost a decade ago, they drew on these reservoirs of courage and determination. They were inspired by the seemingly hopeless efforts of reconciliation in the Middle East. Their vision has brought hope to our unfolding culture of peace. It must also give us the strength to act on our convictions.

We thank Daniel and the diverse members of the Divan Orchestra for bringing their wonderful music to us this evening. As well, I thank the Permanent Mission of Spain and the Department of Public Information for making this concert a reality. Let this music convey to us the values of the Universal Declaration and inspire our commitment to them. Tonight, let us be inspired by the endless possibilities of human talents in the name of our universal rights.

Thank you