

9 March 2010

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki,
President of the 64th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Memorial Ceremony in Honour of the United Nations Victims
of the 12 January Earthquake in Haiti**

Mr. Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Friends and Family Members,

We are gathered here today to pay tribute to the brave men and women of the United Nations who lost their lives serving the cause of peace and security in Haiti. It is with a heavy heart that we receive their families here at the United Nations Headquarters in New York as we honour the memory of our colleagues and friends.

For the Haitian people, everything changed at 16.53 hours on 12 January 2010 when the earthquake struck. All over the world, people reeled at the images of collapsed buildings and the thought of people trapped inside, the destroyed roads and the heavily damaged capital city Port-au-Prince, and the despair and fear of Haitians on the street calling for help. We are still struggling to cope with the enormity of the earthquake, which claimed hundreds of thousands of lives and made more than a million Haitians homeless.

Our hearts broke each time we would hear, over the next several days, the reports of lost colleagues, coming soon to recognize that the United Nations itself had experienced an unprecedented tragedy. We stood in shock as we learned that the highly respected and appreciated leadership of MINUSTAH – SRSRSG Hédi Annabi, DSRSG Luiz Carlos Da Costa and Police Commissioner Douglas Coates – were among those who lost their lives. We mourned, and we continue to mourn, for each and every one of the 101 United Nations brothers and sisters – civilian, military and police personnel – from 29 Member States. Everyone here today knows someone who was affected by this tragedy.

Today, we pause to honour them and pay tribute to their tireless work and sacrifice in the service of the Haitian people and the cause of peace. I believe one way to pay tribute to their service and sacrifice is to demonstrate our continued determination to support Haiti and its people.

After the cameras have left, critical work remains to be done. More than a million people remain homeless in tent cities, with the upcoming rainy season, and new threats of disease and illness. It is not enough to respond only to immediate needs, the ultimate challenge is for Haiti to fully embark on the path to sustainable development. The international community is – and must remain – deeply engaged.

To the families, friends and colleagues who are with us today and to those who could not be with us, I offer the deepest condolences on behalf of Member states who mourn with you and pay tribute to your loved ones. The lives of our colleagues and friends will not be forgotten. Their legacy will continue in serving the cause of peace and security.