

15 October 2011

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser,
President of the 66th Session of the General Assembly,
on the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty**

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

The President of the United Nations General Assembly, H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, regrets that he could not join you for today's event. As Chef de Cabinet of the President of the General Assembly, I am pleased to make the following remarks on his behalf.

It is an honour for me to participate this year in the commemoration of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. I recall that it was the General Assembly that, in 1993, established this day of observance.

I congratulate the convenors for their initiative in organizing this ceremony. It provides us with an opportunity to reflect on and discuss one of the most, if not the most, pressing social issues of our time: how to rid the world of poverty.

It is deeply lamentable that extreme poverty still exists in so many parts of the world, despite the remarkable social and economic development of the last couple of centuries.

The importance the international community attaches to this issue is symbolized by the election of the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger as the very first of the Millennium Development Goals.

Undeniably, it is positive that the world is on track to meet the MDG target of halving the proportion of people living on less than \$1 a day between 1990 and 2015.

However, we must not forget that that progress is very much concentrated in the significant improvement of living conditions in Asia.

Progress is, thus, highly imbalanced within the developing world. The world financial and economic crisis has compounded this imbalance, hitting hardest the most vulnerable countries and social groups. Even if the global target is achieved by 2015, we cannot forget that many countries will lag behind. And, even within the countries that do meet the target, there will be a very large number of individuals still living in poverty.

Under such circumstances, the theme chosen by the convenors of this ceremony to guide our discussion – “From poverty to sustainability: people at the centre of inclusive development” – is most appropriate

and timely. Its formulation is evidently inspired by the lessons of Father Joseph Wresinski, the remarkable individual whose work led to the establishment of this day of observance. Among those lessons I would single out the following:

Firstly, no one should be left aside in the fight against poverty.

Secondly, extreme poverty is the work of mankind and thus can be ended.

Thirdly, the effective fight against poverty requires empowerment of and ownership by those persons most affected by that scourge; and

Fourthly, actions taken to combat poverty require constant evaluation based on the conditions of those worse off.

It will be necessary to keep these lessons in mind as we work towards a successful United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development - Rio+20- and as the date agreed for the full achievement of the MDGs rapidly approaches.

Given the urgency of these matters, “Sustainable development and global prosperity” is one of the four key areas on which I have invited the General Assembly membership to focus its work during this session. It is necessary to build on past experiences and reaffirm the balance between the economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development, with the human being at the centre of these efforts.

This challenge, and others that the world faces today, are too great for any of us to weather alone.

I am deeply committed to working with every Member State and civil society to build bridges for a united global partnership. My intention is that strong collaboration and consensus building, as well as enhanced South-South and triangular cooperation and dialogue among civilizations, will be the hallmarks of the Assembly’s efforts this session.

It is fitting, therefore, that this International Day for the Eradication of Poverty is commemorated in a ceremony organized in partnership between the UN, NGOs and the Missions of two Member States. This is a good example of what we can achieve when we join hands. This is what we need to tackle the issues of our time.

Thank you.