

21 December 2012

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Vuk Jeremić,
President of the 67th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony Marking the completion of the
Capital Master Plan of the United Nations Secretariat Building**

Mr. Secretary-General,
Mr. Under Secretary of State,
Madam City Commissioner,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are here to mark the completion of the Capital Master Plan of the Secretariat Building of the United Nations.

I am proud of the role the General Assembly has played in the historic renovation of one of the world's most iconic modern structures. From the adoption of the initial resolution authorizing the project in February 2001, and subsequent pledges of support, right up to the present moment, the Member States have remained actively engaged in this great undertaking.

On their behalf, allow me to extend my deep appreciation to the Secretary-General and his team for ensuring the faithful reconstruction of the Secretariat building and the rest of the complex.

Excellencies,

Like every institution shaped by the human mind, the United Nations is not perfect. However much it may be wished, it is not in a position to solve all of the world's problems overnight. I am strongly convinced, however, that this Organization remains critical to addressing the growing needs of humanity.

Today, as we rededicate this building this universally recognizable symbol of the United Nations let us also rededicate the vision which informed its construction.

Oscar Niemeyer who passed away only a fortnight ago was one of the greatest architects of the 20th century. He saw his work on the UN Headquarters complex as quite literally building for peace. He described this edifice of light and glass, open to both East and West, as emblematic of his strategy to "create a world [through architecture] equal for everyone, to look at people with optimism, [predisposed to believe] that every nation has a gift to give to the world."

Such words, it seems to me, encapsulate the essence of this Organization in particular, the General Assembly. It is the only institution with universal membership that operates on the basis of the sovereign equality principle, conceived to be the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations.

While the restoration of the Secretariat has been completed, work on the General Assembly building has yet to begin. In a few months, the greatest of parliaments will be relocated for the first time in close to six decades.

Thus the physical renovation of our building will become part of our overall revitalization efforts.

For the UN system to retain the capacity to change the world for the better, we will need to find the strength to keep changing ourselves, as we continue to honor the vision of the founders of this Organization.

Let us enter into the New Year with that in mind, so that the General Assembly's work in the resumed part of the 67th Session may go down in history as an Assembly of Peace an Assembly of Progress and Hope for all mankind.

Thank you very much.