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THE PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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**Statement of H.E. Mr. Vuk Jeremić,
President of the 67th Session of the General Assembly,
at a Concert in the Hall of the General Assembly Organized by the
Permanent Mission of the State of Israel**

Mr. Secretary-General,
Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the UN General Assembly, allow me to extend a heartfelt welcome to our House of Nations on this most special evening.

I would like to express my deep appreciation to Ambassador Ron Prosnor of the State of Israel for his great efforts in bringing us together for tonight's musical experience.

Since the very beginning of my term, he and I have cultivated a fruitful relationship of mutual understanding and respect. He's been one of my most agile deputies, becoming the first Israeli diplomat to preside over the plenary during a speech by a prime minister of the Jewish State.

Later this year, I expect to be the first sitting President of the General Assembly to officially visit his great country.

As I have done in the past, I will again go to Yad Vashem but this time, to attend a special event honoring members of my family, who will be formally recognized in a few weeks in Belgrade, as Righteous Among the Nations for sheltering Jews during the Second World War.

Our bond of solidarity with the Jewish people, forged during those terrible years of privation and struggle, has been extended to the present day.

As a descendant of a Dachau and Mauthausen survivor, it is a legacy I will continue to honor, with reverence and humility.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

From the very dawn of civilization, music has been an indispensable part of human society.

In the Bible, its first reference appears in the Book of Genesis, where music-making is named as one of mankind's three fundamental professions, together with herding and tool forging.

During the Exodus, it came to be associated with the quest for liberty and national emancipation, when the generation of Mosessang joyful songs of thanksgiving to the Almighty for having parted the Red Sea, rescuing them from the clutches of Pharaoh.

King David incorporated the use of music into his prayers and studies of the Torah. He also institutionalized it in the celebration of great events such as the arrival of the Arc of the Covenant to Jerusalem, and introduced it into the Temple's liturgical services.

The voice of the cantor in synagogues around the world is a testament to this lasting bequest.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Music can not only bring individuals closer together, it can also help establish ties between nations.

At the New Year's concert held this January in the General Assembly, the Secretary-General defined music as the world's "universal language. It has the power to touch the hearts of all people," he said, "[reminding] us of our common humanity."

Great music makes up ground for communication, building bridges of understanding between even the most estranged of peoples.

As illustrated by the career of tonight's performer the world renowned Israeli-Iranian artist, Ms. Rita Yahan-Farouz music can indeed can cut across any boundary.

I share Rita's hope that her latest album which celebrates the songs and rhythms of her native Iran can "puncture the wall of tension" between two great and proud nations.

Her music, which transcends the purely Persian or Sephardic, may very well be understood as a powerful entreaty for reconciliation a courageous attempt to establish a common sense of destiny between bitter rivals.

I believe we should consider tonight's concert as an appeal for peace an imploration sung to both sides, for the acrimonious divide between Israel and Iran to be brought down.

Let us therefore be inspired by tonight's performance, and help foster the requisite good-will that could, one day, bring to pass an era of amity in which the rattle of arms is heard no more, giving life at long last to the cherished dream of shalom, solh, peace.

Thank you very much for your attention.