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Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured by the invitation of the Staff Union to speak today at this special ceremony commemorating the contributions made by many of the staff members whose lives were cut short in accidents or due to malicious acts in foreign lands while serving the United Nations. We mourn their loss and pay homage to their courage and devotion. I appeal to Member States to ensure the safety and security of United Nations and associated personnel on their territories. In this respect, I also request and invite Member States, who have not yet done so, to ratify the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel.

The concept and the very foundation of United Nations would be incomplete and void without the staff that carry out its mandate and ideals in all parts of the world. Staff is in the front lines wherever humanitarian assistance is needed, be they in uninhabited demarcation lines between countries when refugees flee from persecution, or in danger zones keeping and building peace between communities in conflict - or simply providing technical support and assistance to those in need in remote villages around the world. We salute the staff of the United Nations in all corners of the world and pay tribute to their unflinching spirit to make our world more humane. In this tribute, I would also like to include some 47,000 United Nations retirees who dedicated their working years and helped evolve this Organization to the powerful force that it is today.

We can be proud of the ethnic and cultural diversity of the staff in the Organization, working side by side, respecting each other's individual identities and living in harmony.

In conclusion, I would like to welcome with enthusiasm the Secretary General's decision and proposal to donate his share of the Nobel Peace Prize to a "United Nations Nobel Peace Prize Memorial Trust Fund". The Fund will be used, and I quote, "to support the education of the children of United Nations staff who gave their lives in the service of peace," unquote. In my personal capacity, I very much endorse the suggestion that the Organization's share should be devoted to the same purpose which I fully support.

Let us be inspired by the noble examples of devotion to peace that we are commemorating. Let us renew our resolve to dedicate ourselves to take this Organization to new heights in the service of mankind.