

United Nations Nations Unies

THE PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

LE PRESIDENT DE L'ASSEMBLEE GENERALE

8 September 2003

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Deputy Secretary-General Frechette,
President Cardoso,
Under-Secretary-General Tharoor,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is indeed a great pleasure for me to address the 56th Annual DPI/NGO Conference on the theme "Human Security and Dignity: Fulfilling the Promise of the United Nations." I am particularly pleased to offer my support to you both as the current President of the General Assembly but also as a long-time supporter of civil society organizations. I have long been convinced of the great usefulness and relevance of your invaluable work in the national and international arena.

This important Conference, the premier non-governmental organization (NGO) event at the United Nations, provides an excellent forum for civil society and the United Nations, as the theme of the Conference implies, to highlight the link between human security and living in dignity, through which the promise of the United Nations will be realized.

I have been involved for many years in the work of NGOs in my own country, the Czech

delegations. Many UN treaty bodies now routinely consider reports from NGOs, alongside official reports from Governments. At the level of field operations, partnership between the UN system and NGOs in humanitarian and development missions has been the rule for decades, with NGOs commonly participating in UN country-level planning processes.

I fully support the Secretary-General's initiative in forming the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations – Civil Society Relations, and would like to take this opportunity to welcome to this Conference its chairman President Cardoso. This panel is charged with the important task of reviewing the relationship between the United Nations and civil society and offer practical recommendations for improved modalities of interaction.

I believe strongly in the value of active NGO and civil society participation in the work of the UN and increased dialogue between governmental and NGO entities. I am aware of the importance and continuous nature of the process to draw the attention of civil society to the work of the United Nations and to encourage them to participate in it. I know from my personal experience both in the NGOs as well as in the government, that to obtain durable positive results one has to work rigorously and perseveringly.

Fortunately, your efforts are bringing together those, who still believe in the noble goals of the United Nations. The discussion on how we work together towards a more effective and mutually supportive relationship to enhance our membership, is more relevant than ever.

Only a few years ago, when the world leaders met in New York during the Millennium Summit, they expressed their firm commitment to the work of the United Nations. The partnership was discussed there and the Member States resolved to give greater opportunities to the non-governmental organizations and civil society to contribute to the realization of the Organization's goals and programmes. The Millennium Summit ended with the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals for the next decade and beyond.

I am deeply convinced that successful and timely implementation of the Millennium Development Goals will be not only a great UN contribution to the struggle against extreme poverty, and for the struggle for the provision of basic human needs from drinking water and basic health, to education and employment but at the same time it will target some of the main causes of tensions and armed conflicts as well as intolerance and terrorism. If we are successful the world will be that much safer, saner and peaceful. The aim is to create conditions enabling all people to live in dignity and safety, free of hunger, fear or oppression.

The United Nations has a vast array of functions to implement its mandates. Its wide range of various bodies and activities are vital and still indispensable. The United Nations is needed, as the only legitimate forum to resolve problems that are transnational in scope and therefore cannot be solved by individual states; some examples - global warming, environmental degradation, fight against diseases such as SARS and HIV/AIDS, drug-trafficking, humanitarian crises, transnational crime, terrorism and armed conflict.

