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**Remarks of the President of the General Assembly at the 55<sup>th</sup>  
Annual DPI/NGO Conference “Rebuilding Societies Emerging  
from Conflict: A Shared Responsibility”  
(Monday, 9 September 2002)**

Under Secretary-General Tharoor, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan Brahimi, High Commissioner for Human Rights Robinson, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my honour and privilege to speak at this annual conference of DPI/NGO on the theme, “Rebuilding Societies Emerging from Conflict: A Shared Responsibility”. Considering the current trend of expanded cooperation between the United Nations system and NGOs, and the urgent nature of the issue of rebuilding post conflict societies, this year’s theme for the Conference is both timely and relevant.

As you all know, the system of maintaining international peace and security has been gradually changing from reaction to prevention because prevention is less costly and more efficient than reaction. As preventive mechanisms have yet to be fully elaborated, reaction is still necessary for conflicts where prevention is not applied in time. It is my hope that a culture of prevention will prevail in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Toward this end, I note that the United Nations has worked actively to develop a prevention mechanism during the last decade, with the UN system developing its own internal coordination programmes. Furthermore, the United Nations has held high-level and working level meetings with regional organizations in the context of conflict prevention and peace-building. And now this Conference takes the initiative to link the efforts of the United Nations to those of the NGO community in the important area of peace-building.

Today’s theme, “rebuilding societies emerging from conflicts” holds a dual meaning of reaction and prevention, in the sense that it needs follow-up measures of reaction to deal with the results of conflicts and prevention of the recurrence of conflicts. Therefore, if we could develop effective ways to address this issue of post conflict peace building, we could synchronize the

reaction and prevention into a new dimension of maintaining international peace and security.

As President of the General Assembly, I have underlined the importance of prevention of conflicts and post conflict peace building since I assumed the Presidency of the 56<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly. In this regard, I visited four African countries in April this year, which were Ghana, Sierra Leone, Gambia and Senegal, and recognized the achievements, in the context of the post conflict peace building, of the UN personnel including the peace-keeping troops of UNAMSIL and local people in the region.

Furthermore, the General Assembly has held eight open-ended informal consultations on the prevention of armed conflicts. The next Session of the General Assembly will continue to consider this item and, I hope it would adopt a substantive resolution on this item.

From the perspective of the General Assembly, prevention of conflicts and post conflict peace building represent the area of the work of the General Assembly which requires consolidated and integrated approach embracing NGOs, civil society and private sector. Therefore, the General Assembly will continue to play its due part as a universal organization to develop a culture of peace.

I believe that a primary objective of peace-building efforts is to establish a politically stable and economically sustainable society. To accomplish this goal, actions must be taken in a multi-disciplinary manner in its widest term, encompassing political, social, financial, economic and legal matters, including human rights and the building of good governance, sound civil and judicial institutions.

Certainly, primary responsibility with regard to these efforts should rest with national governments concerned while the international community and NGOs play supporting roles. The country concerned should be involved in determining priorities for external assistance and mobilizing its human, technical and financial resources to maximize the impact of the external assistance.

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However, the UN and NGOs can closely cooperate in determining better ways to mobilize the political will and resources from Member States and donors by communicating more effectively the objectives, tasks, timeliness and operational arrangements of peace-building activities.

I believe that it would be essential for the UN and NGOs to coordinate closely in identifying the underlying causes of conflict situations through a regular exchange of relevant information and analysis. In this regard, the UN and NGOs could establish innovative mechanisms for the exchange of information regarding each organization's peace-building capacity, expertise and experience.

The experiences of the United Nations in Namibia, Mozambique, Liberia, El Salvador, Guatemala, the Central African Republic, Eastern Slovenia, Cambodia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and East Timor are replete with lessons on both how to successfully conduct peace-building activities and what works as well as what does not. Similarly, NGOs have had successes and failures. We need to look at ways in which we can share these experiences and build on them.

In this regard, I could suggest the following areas of cooperation between the UN and NGOs. First, promoting complementarity of efforts based on a shared assessment of relative comparative advantages between the UN and NGOs. Second, developing an integrated operational response to the multifaceted objectives of peace-building. Third, jointly monitoring the results of their peace-building operations. Fourth, mobilizing the necessary political will and resources for peace-building.

Finally, I am quite convinced that this Conference will provide an opportunity to share lessons and further develop the coordination mechanism between the UN and NGOs for post conflict peace building. Thank you.