

Donald Treimann
Presentation at the Opening Session of the 55th Annual
DPI/NGO Conference

Mr. Tharoor,
Mrs. Robinson,
Mr. Brahimi,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear friends and colleagues,

I would like to welcome all of you, particularly my NGO colleagues to the 55th Annual DPI/NGO Conference. It is a great honour for me as the Chair of the NGO/DPI Executive Committee – your Executive Committee – to be here today and greet you. This figure – 55th – tells a lot. Tomorrow, the 57th Session of the United Nations General assembly will begin. As Shashi Tharoor pointed out, cooperation between UN and NGOs started right after the birth of the United Nations. Department of Public Information is one of the most active parts of the UN system that views partnership with NGOs as vital for the success of UN activities.

I would like to thank Deputy Secretary-General Ms. Frechette and H.E. Mr. Han Seng-soo, President of the 56th Session of the General Assembly, for their welcoming addresses. I would also like to thank our keynote speakers Mrs. Mary Robinson and Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi whose insightful presentations, I believe, set the tone for the rest of the Conference. We are privileged to have them as well as many other prominent speakers for the 3 days of the Conference. And for that my gratitude goes to the Planning Committee of the Conference, in particular its Co-chairs, Ms. Sherrill Kazan and Mr. Paul Hoeffel, and their colleagues from NGOs and the NGO Section of DPI. They worked tirelessly since the beginning of this year to put together this timely and informative event, and we are all here to see the results of this labour.

I would also like to acknowledge the work of my colleagues on the NGO/DPI Executive Committee, who in the past year worked closely with the Department of Public Information to further the goals of collaboration between NGOs and the United Nations. I would like to list just a few achievements that I would like to give credit for to all members of the Executive Committee. First of all, I am happy to report that the Executive Committee that represents all NGOs associated with the Department of Public

Information is financially stable. The standing committees function smoothly and harmoniously. The Communications Workshop Committee cooperated with the NGO Section in organizing three Communications Workshops last year attended by an average of 200 participants. The By-laws Committee began its work on revising the NGO/DPI Executive Committee's by-laws as requested by many NGO representatives to achieve more effective and efficient functioning of the organization. The ??? Internet Committee ??? made good progress with revamping our web site <http://www.ngodpiexecom.org/> that, we hope, will have fully updated information on our work as early as next month. And we certainly hope that you will visit it regularly.

An important part of our work here at the UN is the programme of weekly briefings organized by the NGO Section of DPI in close cooperation with the NGO/DPI Executive Committee. A lot of you attend these briefings and know their value. Quite a few of you contributed to the choice of topic for a particular briefing, suggestions for speakers and other elements of this process. We encourage you to get even more involved. After all, these briefings are for your representatives here in New York, who can then pass information to the headquarters and field offices of

your organizations. So let us and DPI know what you want to learn about at these weekly gatherings.

We also have good working relationships with the NGO Section in maintaining the NGO Resource Centre here at Headquarters – your home away from home. Many hours were put by NGO representatives in helping staff with providing their colleagues with necessary services. I encourage those of you who came here for the first time and have not visited it yet to go there – it is located on the same level as conference rooms where we will have our plenary sessions and many of the workshops. There have been plans by DPI for some time to renovate the Resource Centre to make it even friendlier and more useful for NGOs. We understand that certain financial constraints may not have allowed to proceed with them. However we urge DPI to go ahead with this renovation. We need this place to be more efficient, and we are eager to provide the necessary support.

Many of you here represent NGOs in consultative status with the Economic and Social Commission (ECOSOC). We have very close working relationships with CONGO – Conference of NGOs in consultative relationship with the United Nations. I am happy that Renate Bloem, a personal friend of mine, who is the President

of CONGO, is with us today and will come to greet you after me. We hope that even closer partnership awaits us in the future, and we will work with CONGO to achieve it.

The title of our Conference is “Rebuilding Societies Emerging from Conflict: A Shared Responsibility”. We will hear from our distinguished speakers about how this is done in practical terms in most difficult and excruciating circumstances throughout the world. What I would like to emphasize is the second part of the title – shared responsibility. I strongly believe it applies to everything that we all here are involved in, be it humanitarian assistance or economic recovery or emergency relief. NGOs should work hand in hand with UN, with governments, with private sector and – very important – with each other to achieve our common goals. Attending this event is a perfect opportunity for you to start new partnerships – and friendships – and we encourage you to use your time here for that.

Finally, the dates of this Conference coincide with the anniversary of the tragic events of September 11th. Many of you were here for the last year’s Conference that was disrupted by the terrorist attack in New York. Last year the topic was “NGOs Today: The Diversity of the Volunteer Experience.” The volunteer

spirit proved to be indestructible. We saw that in the actions of the many volunteers who helped in the days after the disaster. We also it during the special closing session of the Conference on 13 September last year when many speakers and NGO representatives got together to show that we are there for each other, and nothing could stop the valuable work you are engaged in. I salut this spirit and wish you all success in your work and a successful and productive Conference.