

**Presentation of Joan Levy, Speaker, 56<sup>th</sup> Annual DPI/NGO Conference,  
*Human Security and Dignity: Fulfilling the Promise of the United Nations*  
Monday, 8 September 2003, United Nations Headquarters, New York**

Welcome Speech for 2003 Conference  
Joan Levy, Chair, NGO/DPI Executive Committee  
General Assembly Hall 8 September 2003

Thank you Mr. Undersecretary-General. Good morning. On behalf of the NGO/DPI Executive Committee, it is a pleasure and privilege to welcome you to the 56<sup>th</sup> Annual DPI/NGO Conference, “Human Security and Dignity: Fulfilling the Promise of the United Nations.” We meet at a time of terrible tragedy, senseless killings, and tremendous personal loss to the United Nations family. That so many of you have chosen to be here today in the General assembly Hall is a clear indication that, however discouraging the setbacks of recent weeks and months have been, Non-Governmental Organizations are not going to be deterred in their partnerships with the United Nations.

For NGOs associated with the United Nations, this three-day Conference is the premiere event of the year and brings together NGOs with diverse interests and agendas to listen, learn, participate, and network with each other and our colleagues in the United Nations, from UN member states to other sectors of civil society. It is one of the few opportunities when we, as UN partners, come together from around the world to compare notes. Each year we value this opportunity more.

The NGO/DPI Executive Committee, representing and serving over 1,300 NGOs associated with the Department of Communication and Public Information, is a full partner with the DPI for the Annual Conference. This gathering, however, is only one of the several activities in which we are involved. I would like to give you a brief overview of the activities of the Executive Committee this past year and tell you about some of the initiatives planned for the future.

Through the Weekly NGO Briefings organized by the NGO Section of DPI, our members are able to interact on a regular basis, gathering valuable insight into the work of the United Nations, and identifying ways to communicate this information to our constituencies. The Executive Committee and DPI also collaborate to organize daylong NGO Communication Workshops. These presentations enable us to hone our communication skills and be more effective in our interaction with UN and government officials, as well as our own Organizations.

Recent Workshops emphasized more extensive applications of information technologies for outreach. UN staff members and NGOs shared information about effective use of web sites, listservs and interactive media opportunities. A second Communication Workshop featured a presentation by Toastmasters International that was designed to build confidence and develop better oral communication for NGO representatives. A

third Workshop explored ways that NGOs can best communicate the UN message-to the media and to the public at large. All of these efforts have enabled us to inform each other more professionally and reach out beyond the walls of the United Nations to our colleagues around the world.

I am also pleased to announce the major redesign of the NGO/DPI Executive Committee web site, which is now a far more valuable and informative tool for associated NGOs and others. It is also an integral part of this year's Conference in a very special way.

As I speak, for the first time, NGOs who cannot be here in person, will have access through their computers to each of our plenary sessions by accessing the Internet webcast made possible by UNTV and the information technology section of DPI. NGO representatives anywhere in the world can now submit questions to the Plenary Speakers, make comments to fellow NGOs at our on-line Conference Forum, and truly talk with with each other. This platform is a means for discussion, dialogue and feedback while the Conference is in progress. We thank The Art Centre of Design on Pasadena, the NGO/DPI Executive Committee and its Webmaster, the Interactive Media Committee, and our colleagues in DPI for making this possible. In addition to exciting, expanding coverage of the Conference, everyone will be able to access the archives of the proceedings at their convenience in the weeks to come.

At one time, I represented a NGO half way around the world. We communicated through E-mail, book exchanges, reports and videos, but there was great frustration on their part because of the delay in receiving information about current UN activities. In turn, we, in New York had delayed feedback from them about their projects. This week we have "on the spot" listening, viewing, and an opportunity for immediate response. This is an important step in what hopefully, will be routine in the future.

But what of the many people and places that have little or no available technology? This is still a concern for both NGOs and the United Nations. Members of the Outreach Committee have developed pilot programs in other parts of the world. The theme of these mini-seminars has mirrored that of our Conference. We are now devising ways in which to expand these projects to as yet untapped areas where NGO groups are situated. We also hope to join other NGO Organizations and United Nations Agencies in future Outreach efforts.

The *NGO Reporter*, our quarterly newsletter, will continue to carry informative topics prepared and written by NGO "reporters." A new brochure, detailing current and future projects, will be available later this fall, and will be enclosed in the final Conference report.

Finally, we, on the Executive Committee, have a vision of reaching out to all NGOs wherever they are, to work together, to inform, learn, communicate and participate in every way possible to "Fulfill the Promise of the United Nations."

Thank you for your attention. I wish you a challenging and exciting three days. Have a great time!