

**Welcoming Remarks by Mr. Shashi Tharoor,
Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public
Information and Moderator,
of the Opening Session
56th Annual DPI/NGO Conference
*Human Security and Dignity: Fulfilling the Promise of the
United Nations*
United Nations, New York, 8 September 2003**

[10:10 a.m. Safety officer takes the floor to briefly explain security procedures

Begin at 10:15 Mr. Tharoor is seated at centre on podium with GA President to his left; the SG to his right. *Note - All speakers with the exception of ST will speak from the lectern in front of the podium]*

Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Friends and Colleagues,

Thank you for joining us. It is an honour for me to welcome all of you gathered here this morning for the opening session of the 56th Annual Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations associated with the Department of Public Information, entitled “*Human Security and Dignity: Fulfilling the Promise of the United Nations*”. In particular, I welcome those of you who have come from around the world to meet with us and share your experiences. I would also like to extend our warm welcome to those NGO representatives who are joining us by live videoconference in Washington D.C., Geneva, Vienna, Yaounde and Mexico City.

I am very pleased to inform you that this year’s Conference is being web cast live around the world for the first time. This represents a joint effort between the NGO Executive Committee and the Department of Public Information to reach out beyond these walls to

as many interested NGOs as possible. All those with a personal computer and access to the Internet can now access these proceedings in real time.

This Conference provides us with a valuable forum for representatives of NGOs, United Nations and Government officials, to jointly reassert our convictions that living secure and dignified lives remain viable goals, through common commitment and international solidarity.

Before I introduce our distinguished speakers, I would like to make some brief observations about the special relationship that the Department of Public Information enjoys with the NGO community. Close cooperation between non-governmental organizations and the United Nations dates back to the drafting of the United Nations Charter. The first DPI/NGO Conference was held in 1947, only a year after the United Nations held its first General Assembly. Marking its 56th year, this unique gathering is now anticipated as the premier NGO event at Headquarters, reflecting the ever-deepening involvement of civil society in the work of the United Nations. Despite the many obstacles that prevent interested participants from coming to New York, your presence here clearly demonstrates that this is not a community that is easily deterred.

Our Conference comes just weeks after the violence in Iraq that intentionally caused the death of 15 United Nations colleagues, including the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Iraq, Mr. Sergio Viera de Mello. This was a blow not only to the United Nations but also to the scores of dedicated NGOs that work with us in that country. The candlelight vigils and peace marches held around the world in their honour have demonstrated the public's and the United Nations resolve to carry on with the work of peace building and collective security.

The UN presence in Iraq is primarily an emergency humanitarian effort, aimed to assure the minimal needs that are lacking for the majority of Iraqi people. It is fitting that this year's Conference

underscores our common efforts and determination to assure human security and dignity for all people. This is only possible through a refocusing of resources on development and by strengthening the participation of civil society actors in this complex endeavour. I believe that, despite setbacks, this is happening.

Through the work of the Department of Public Information and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, which facilitates NGO relations with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, over 3,000 NGOs have established direct ties with the UN Secretariat. Thousands more partner with the UN family of organizations around the world. Many of these organizations work hand-in-hand with the United Nations or on their own to foster human security, education reform, sustainable development and people's empowerment.

This morning, we will hear a report from the Chair of the Executive Committee of NGOs associated with DPI as well as the Chair of this year's Conference. I am also pleased that the President of the Conference of NGOs, CONGO, which represents many of the NGOs in consultative status with the UN through ECOSOC, will also bring greetings. DPI continues to promote close working relationships with these two representative organizations.

Our associated NGOs reflect the growing and increasingly well-organized network of civil society organizations. This flourishing network provides the United Nations with the support and energy required to tackle the complex challenges before us. Conference speakers will tell us about the many creative and effective civil society initiatives taking place in all corners of the world.

Several of our partners are taking the opportunity afforded by this gathering to inform us on their projects in the coming days. One midday workshop on Africa's civil society and human security will highlight the special needs of Africa and will feature several participants from affected countries. The Finnish Government is launching its initiative on the dilemmas of global governance, the Helsinki Process on Globalization and Democracy, which also

highlights the theme of human security. We will be updated on the progress of the Millennium Declaration and the key role that the Millennium Development Goals are playing system wide. The World Federation of United Nations Associations, for example, has timed the release of its second global survey of civil society organizations and their activities relating to the Millennium Declaration and its Development Goals to this meeting. The report, "We the Peoples..." notes that NGOs increasingly see that the MDGs are essentially about building global partnerships to enhance human security and dignity. Over the next three days we will explore these and other initiatives in some detail.

[10:18 a.m.]

To begin, I am pleased to introduce the Secretary-General of the United Nations, who will be welcoming you on behalf of the United Nations. Mr. Kofi Annan is the seventh person to assume this post. Excellency, the floor is yours.

[10:28 a.m.]

Thank you Mr. Secretary-General (comments).

It is a tradition that the President of the General Assembly addresses the DPI/NGO Conference. We are pleased to have with us today His Excellency Jan Kavan, President of the 57th Session of the General Assembly. Mr. Kavan has served as President during this last year and has overseen efforts to refocus attention on making human security and dignity a global reality. He is also a Deputy in the Parliament of the Czech Republic. Mr. President, the floor is yours.

Thank you, Mr. President (comments)

[GA President and SG leave podium. Mr. Cardoso will be seated in VIP seat to the right of the podium]

[10:35 a.m.]

I would now like to invite the Chairman of the NGO/DPI Executive Committee and the NGO Chair of the Conference to join me on the podium.

[Ms. Levy and Ms. Munlin sit to Mr. Tharoor's left and right]

We now hear the keynote address of this opening session, by Mr. Fernando Henrique Cardoso, former President of Brazil.

It is my pleasure to introduce Mr. Cardoso, who has been serving as Chair of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations since February. In this capacity, Mr. Cardoso is overseeing 12 other Panel members in taking stock of the United Nations work with civil society and making recommendations for improvement. Mr. Cardoso has had a distinguished career in public service and academia. During his two-term presidency from 1995 to 2002, he revitalized the Brazilian economy, reformed the State, promoted dialogue and collaboration with civil society and strengthened Brazil's social security network. Mr. Cardoso actively participated in the struggle to restore democracy in Brazil and in 1986 helped found the Brazilian Social Democratic Party. He is among the most influential figures in the analysis of social change, international development and state reform. Mr. Cardoso, the floor is yours.

[10:50 a.m.]

Thank you Mr. Cardoso (comments on the keynote address) and farewell.

[11:10]

We now have the opportunity to hear from elected NGO representatives who work closely with the NGO community associated with the United Nations and the NGO Section of the Department of Public Information. First, I should like to introduce Ms. Joan Levy, who is the Chair of the NGO/DPI Executive Committee and the United Nations Representative for End Child

Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes. The Executive Committee works with the more than 1,400 NGOs associated with the Department of Public Information and is a co-organizer of this annual DPI/NGO Conference. Ms. Levy, the floor is yours.

[11:20]

Thank you Ms. Levy (comments)

I am now pleased to invite Ms. Renate Bloem, President of the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CONGO) to join us from the floor. CONGO works on behalf of the NGOs in consultative status to develop and improve the relationship between the United Nations and civil society. Ms. Bloem, the floor is yours.

[11:30]

Thank you Ms. Bloem (comments)

It is my pleasure to introduce the final speaker of this opening session, the Chair of the Conference and Co-chair of its Planning Committee, Ms. Fannie Munlin. Ms. Munlin is the United Nations Representative of the National Council of Negro Women. Ms. Munlin and her committee have worked tirelessly with our NGO Section to put together a rich and diverse Conference. Ms. Munlin, we thank you and the members of your committee especially. The floor is yours.

[11:40]

Thank you Ms. Munlin (comments)

As we conclude this opening session, I would like to thank all those who have participated this morning for setting the tone of this Conference. If the quality of this session is indicative of the Conference, I am sure that we will have a most remarkable three

days. There are a couple of logistical matters that I wish to share before ending...[these will be provided on the morning of the Conference].

End opening session