

THE INTERNATIONAL HUMAN SOLIDARITY DAY
20 December 2006 (observed on 15 December 2006)

Statement by

**H. E. Ambassador Prasad Kariyawasam (Sri Lanka), Vice-President of ECOSOC,
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Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates, Senior officials of the UN
Ladies and Gentlemen:

From time immemorial wise men have pondered upon the worth of the human person and the value of human solidarity. Over 2500 years ago the Lord Buddha, the enlightened sage from Asia said “those who are imbued with loving kindness and are ever in harmony with the humankind lead the path to human solidarity “. In recent times the interconnectedness of human existence was poignantly expressed by John Donne in his famous line from 'Meditations XVII' when he said "No man is an island unto himself."

These ideas reflect the brotherhood of humankind that have echoed throughout human history. Over a period of time, the natural urge for brotherhood grew increasingly broader and began to cross boundaries of nationhood, sex, color and race. Given increasing globalization, it is more important than ever for citizens of the world to understand and adopt this theme of human brotherhood that could overcome human prejudices. In fact, our future may depend on the ability of humankind to see itself as part of a greater whole.

Solidarity is at the core of this concept of greater whole. It is the principle of solidarity that transforms the recognition of interdependence into a commitment for the common good. It is solidarity that enables us to devote ourselves to the good of all.

The spirit of solidarity and sense of a shared destiny is a recurring theme in the UN Charter. The United Nations was conceived as a response to a challenge posed to all mankind; the need to maintain international peace and security on the one hand and promote economic and social development for all, on the other. With its major UN conferences and summits since the

1990s, including the Millennium Summit, the United Nations has been an important catalyst in the development of a common development agenda built around the shared values and aspirations encapsulated in the UN Charter.

While the agreement on a common vision based on the virtues of solidarity is a historic achievement in itself, the major task of putting our words into action still largely lies ahead of us. We continue to be faced with the challenges of extreme poverty, disease, debt, scarcity of resources and natural disasters continue to plague our lives. Both, developing and developed countries need to hold themselves accountable to the ambitious agenda which we have set for ourselves. Solidarity between the North and the South as well as among developing countries is a central element in the implementation of the United Nations Development Agenda.

The concept of solidarity between the North and the South is perhaps best encapsulated in the concept of global partnership, as contained in the Millennium Declaration, the International Conference on Financing for Development and the Johannesburg Conference on Sustainable Development. The challenge is to make the concept of global partnership a guiding principle of our actions. With globalization and the access to modern information and communication technology individual citizens have increasingly become an engine that is holding governments accountable to their ambitious visions. In particular, as pictures on the enormous human suffering in cases of natural or humanitarian disasters are transported directly into living rooms, individuals have demonstrated a very strong sense of solidarity with those suffering thousands of miles away. Sri Lanka experienced it first hand in the aftermath of Tsunami. We felt that humanity was alive in compassion. Our responsibilities as representatives from countries both of the North and the South is to ensure that this expression of solidarity is channelled in such a way that it has maximum impact on addressing the most pressing needs of those who most need our assistance.

While solidarity between the North and the South is of great importance, we also need to look at the possibilities of strengthening solidarity among developing countries. South-South cooperation has a major and growing potential that still needs to be tapped and developed fully and systematically in support of development needs and goals. To this end, Sri Lanka initiated a

co-operation programme entitled “*Hands Across Asia*” to share our expertise in several specialised fields with developing countries in Asia and beyond. We believe that a lot is being done by others and we can do more to make south-south solidarity a model for global partnership.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, the speed of air travel and communication, intertwined economies, and the threat of terrorism and warfare mean that the actions of any one country or group can be felt almost immediately by the whole. Today, more than ever before “No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main.” And UN remains the forum to strengthen global solidarity to fight these menaces.

I would like to conclude by thanking the President of ECOSOC for convening this meeting today. I hope this will set the stage for strengthened solidarity between the North and South, as we undertake efforts with renewed vigor to address the challenges facing our common humanity and this planet, which is our only home.

I thank.