

18 March 2008

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Srgjan Kerim,  
President of the 62nd Session of the General Assembly,  
at the National Model United Nations**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Model UN Delegates,

Welcome to the United Nations General Assembly.

It is my particular pleasure to welcome also the Secretary-General.

Youth are an important global constituency, with a stake in the work of the General Assembly, not only in the future, but also today.

The fact that in recent years Member States have included youth representatives in their national delegations is proof that young people have meaningful contributions to make to this Organization.

At the opening of the 62nd Session of the General Assembly, I presented Member States with messages created by young people in my country regarding poverty, inequality and their expectations for the future. In doing this, I reminded Member States that our work concerns not only the delegations represented in this hall, but in fact all of humanity and all generations, and that we have a responsibility toward them.

The priority issues on the agenda of the 62nd Session are truly global – both with regard to the challenges they present and the solutions they require: From climate change, to financing for development, counter-terrorism, UN reform and the millennium development goals, no one state – nor one group of states– can tackle these issues alone.

However, the international community is confronting a paradox. On the one hand, everyone understands that global problems require global solutions, and that these can only be reached through mutual respect and partnership. On the other hand, the high level of mistrust, tension and fear of the ‘other’ is evident among states and in the perceptions and behavior of people throughout the world.

For this reason, I have aimed to foster a spirit of cooperation and to involve of other sectors of society that can help the General Assembly to make real progress on the many challenges we face.

Climate change was the focus of the general debate of the 62nd Session. Then, from 11-13 February, the General Assembly held a thematic debate on “Addressing Climate Change: The United Nations and the World at Work. This spring, I am convening follow-up discussions focusing on 1) countries in special situations (SIDS, LLDC) and 2) the role of the business sector.

The process of Financing for Development is also underway. It is time to take action and involve partners with the resources, vision and commitment to make progress a reality.

On the Millennium Development Goals, I will convene an informal thematic debate on 1-2 April entitled “Recognizing the achievements, addressing the challenges and getting back on track to achieve the MDGs by 2015.” The debate will focus on poverty and hunger; education; health (maternal and child health, malaria and TB) to highlight lessons learned and possible additional measures to ensure that the goals are attained.

Additionally, I will hold other Informal Thematic Debates:

On improving the management of the UN (8-9 April) –

The process for renovating the United Nations building has begun. Like the building which is showing signs of its years, the mentality and working methods of the UN are also dated, and it is our task to modernize the UN not only on the outside, but also on the inside, with new technology, new ideas, and the capacity to adapt to the needs of the future. As tomorrow’s diplomats and international civil servants – this task will be yours to complete.

We are also breaking new ground by convening thematic debates on timely issues such as human trafficking (3 June), and human security (July).

Countering terrorism is another priority issue which has forced the UN to reflect on ways to deal with new actors and networks across borders and beyond the purview of any one State. A review of the Global Counter Terrorism Strategy is scheduled for September of this year.

Security Council reform also remains high on the agenda. There is widespread recognition that the status quo is not acceptable. As threats to international security have changed and increased since 1945, so must the decision-making structures responsible for preventing and responding to those challenges.

System-wide Coherence is another process which demands attention. The UN has grown in size and scope, and often the UN will have many different agencies and programmes in one country. Ensuring that the UN delivers as one – in a coherent way - and that its work at the country level corresponds to the priorities and plans of the country in question is urgent, so that we can effectively manage our resources and maximize our impact.

The issue of HIV/AIDS cannot be forgotten. Despite progress in many parts of the world, HIV/AIDS continues to wield a devastating impact. No one problem can be viewed in isolation.

For communities affected by diseases such as HIV/AIDS, development, human rights and human security are also threatened.

For the UN to respond to both new and on-going challenges, it must be an agile institution that reflects present-day realities, and takes into account the evolution of sovereignty. Sovereign rights go hand in hand with sovereign duties and global responsibilities. You can't have one without the other.

The post Second World War institutions were set up to maintain peace and security, economic and financial stability, promote health, and protect the environmental sphere, but they are inadequate to address the challenges of a globalized world.

We need more responsibility and accountability on the part of Member states and international institutions, as well as regional entities and non-state actors. Together we have to move from recognizing problems to the identifying and implementing solutions.

As I mentioned before, the beginning of the Capital Master Plan to renovate the UN building should signal that it is time to renovate our mindset as well. All key players in the international community, without exception, must reposition themselves. Only then can we achieve the effective multilateralism that is needed now, more than ever.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Globalization has brought the world closer together, erasing gaps of space and time – yet much of the world's population remains at the margins of this progress with little chance of competing in an ever more accelerating and competitive global economy.

As 2008 marks the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we must ask ourselves what tools will guarantee human rights and opportunities for all.

I believe the first step is a new mindset. We need a new culture of international relations based on the principles of freedom, mutual respect, solidarity, and shared responsibility, and the values of human rights, human security, responsibility to protect and sustainable development. These are the ingredients of a vision for the future and the basis for the UN of the 21st and 22nd century, the UN that will be in your hands.

I urge you to begin to realize this new culture as of now.

With information technology reaching ever farther corners of the world, people everywhere know what standard of living others enjoy, and experience frustration and dissatisfaction with not having the same possibilities.

Over 200 million young people worldwide live in extreme poverty. Achieving the Millennium Development Goals is therefore as much your concern as it is that of the Member States that committed themselves to achieving the MDGs.

As college students, and Model UN participants, your awareness of global issues is vital. How you cope with these realities and the values that you choose to live by will determine not only the course of your lives, but also the direction of society globally and the future of the planet.

Your awareness and sensitivity to the imbalances of the world should not depress you, but rather inspire you to become agents of change, to challenge accepted notions, and take action on behalf of those in need.

The media targets young people. If you articulate your concerns loud and clear, these will resonate in global public opinion and will become policy priorities in future.

This era has brought about greater mobility between nations and continents, and greater capacity to communicate between cultures than ever before. We have the opportunity to break down barriers. Your generation is more educated and interconnected than any previous one, so you must lead this effort.

Don't retreat to problem solving in Second Life. Use your power to make a difference in this life, let the tools, imagination and dreams that you have, help you create the future that you deserve.

As you prepare to tackle the difficult and timely issues on your agenda, I wish you many inspiring debates and much success.

I don't know how many of you are aware that the UN building is constructed on a land donated by John D. Rockefeller who transformed his private property to a collective good of community. In his connective allow me to quote him: "I believe that every right implies a responsibility; every opportunity, an obligation; every possession a duty."

Thank you.