

16 November 2011

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser,
President of the 66th Session of the General Assembly,
on the occasion of the International Day for Tolerance**

Fifteen years have passed since the United Nations General Assembly invited Member States to observe the International Day for Tolerance on 16 November.

Today, as our world goes through a period of unprecedented transition, it is more pressing than ever that we foster tolerance among the world's populations.

In this time of change, we remind ourselves that knowledge, openness, communication, freedom of expression and freedom of thought, conscience and belief are essential elements for peace, respect and appreciation of diversity.

It is gratifying to note that there is growing acknowledgement of the need for tolerance and dialogue among different cultures and groups of people. However, we are also witnessing the continuation, and in some cases an increase, of discrimination, extremism and radicalism.

The complexities and challenges of today's world call for enhanced respect, understanding and appreciation between individuals, families and communities. Integral to this approach are attitudes of openness, mutual listening and solidarity. In this respect, schools, universities, the home and the workplace are all important places for further promoting tolerance. Greater efforts need to be made, in particular, to teach children about tolerance and human rights, about diversity and other cultures, and about other ways of life. Peace education needs to be a part of the teaching in all educational institutions. The media also has an important, constructive role to play in facilitating free and open dialogue.

On this International Day, I encourage Member States to reaffirm their commitment to promoting the universal human rights and fundamental freedoms of their peoples by supporting activities that build tolerance, including those directed towards educational establishments and the wider public. In doing so, we will enrich our oneness and our diversity, and thereby help to build a peaceful world for all.