

22 June 2011

**Acceptance Speech of H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser,
President-elect of the 66th Session of the General Assembly**

[Spoke in English] It is with great honour that I thank you, my dear colleagues and friends, for electing me by acclamation as President of the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the leadership of His Excellency President Deiss as President of the General Assembly at its present session. I would also like to thank His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his presence today, and to congratulate him on his re-election as Secretary-General of the United Nations. Mr. Ban's re-election is an indication of the credibility he enjoys. The success of the Organization over the past five years, which has strengthened the United Nation's prominent place on the world stage, will no doubt be counted among his many achievements. I am glad that I will work with him during my Presidency of the General Assembly.

[Continued in Arabic] My election to this high position would not have been possible without the trust of the Asian Group, of which I am proud and to which I am grateful. I would also like to express thanks for the unlimited support from my own Government, the State of Qatar, under the leadership of His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, and His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, Heir Apparent, as well as support from His Excellency Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabr Al-Thani, Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs. In this regard, I would like to welcome His Excellency Mr. Ahmad bin Abdullah Al-Mahmoud, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Member of the Council of Ministers of the State of Qatar, for his presence today at my inauguration ceremony.

I would like to focus a little on the particular importance of the sixth-sixth session of the United Nations General Assembly, during which the world will go through important changes and face enormous political, social, economic and environmental challenges. Not a month goes by that we do not hear about a natural or a man-made disaster and the subsequent food, security, health and education crises that inevitably follow. At the same time, there are still people under occupation, oppression and injustice, who are yearning for freedom, dignity and justice. Add to that human rights and peacekeeping operations, sustainable development, the concerns of the least developed countries and small island States, the eradication of poverty, South-South cooperation, financing for development, the final outcome document of Rio de Janeiro, international trade, dialogue among civilizations, the culture of peace, mediation, disarmament, combating international terrorism, system-wide coherence, the scale of assessments for apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations, and numerous organizational and administrative matters, as well as other sensitive issues.

In addition to these crucial issues, I would be glad to receive your endorsement for the theme that I am proposing for the high-level debate at the opening of the sixty-sixth session, which is “the role of mediation in the settlement of disputes by peaceful means”. I believe that selection of this theme will enhance debate and deepen cooperation on this important issue, which lies at the heart of the work of the United Nations.

I speak openly as I realize that all these challenges and issues affect the pivotal role of the United Nations, its credibility and its existence. Therefore, the integrity, legitimacy, survival and effectiveness of this Organization depend on you all.

Respect for diversity and pluralism, regardless of religion, race or ethnicity, is a principle on which the United Nations was founded. I am honoured, therefore, to have been chosen by my dear friends from different religions, races and ethnicities to serve as President of this Assembly. I pledge to you that I will undertake this important role in a spirit of constructive cooperation and mutual respect. I will assume this Presidency with determination and persistence backed by two decades of experience in the diplomatic corps at the United Nations. My efforts will be supported by a competent team, which I have selected with care and attention and which reflects the very diversity in this Hall.

Throughout my Presidency, I will work in close cooperation and full coordination with all Member States and regional groups. It is only through our joint efforts that we can promote the noble goals of this Organization, preserve international peace and security and strengthen friendship and good neighbourly relations between nations and peoples.

The road to success must be founded on the principle of partnership and a deep sense of justice and responsibility. I will not limit my Presidency to presiding over meetings or reading statements; but I will focus on strengthening the role of the General Assembly and improving constructive cooperation between the Assembly and the various United Nations organs, specialized agencies and other international and regional organizations. I also aspire to act as a bridge between developed, developing and least developed countries in order to serve the interests of all Member States and the United Nations system as a whole. The focus of my efforts will be on building consensus on major global challenges facing the world today, including armed conflict, the rights of peoples to self-determination, hunger, poverty, terrorism, climate change, the global economic and financial crisis, and humanitarian response to natural disasters.

[Continued in English] I will not hesitate to help you overcome your differences over these issues. I will also expect you to shoulder your responsibilities as Member States to address these challenges with responsibility and professionalism. Here I quote Margaret Thatcher: “I do not know anyone who has got to the top without hard work. That is the recipe. It will not always get you to the top, but should get you pretty near”.