

21 September 2011

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser,
President of the 66th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Opening of the General Debate**

Excellencies, Heads of State and Government, Mr. Secretary-General, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my honour to welcome you to the General Debate of the 66th session of the General Assembly. I would like to express my sincere gratitude for your active participation in the High-level Meetings of the General Assembly over the last two days. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his outstanding leadership of the United Nations and for his initiative in organizing a number of important high-level events this week. I wish you all great success for these important discussions.

Let there be no doubt that 2011 is the year of new horizons. A look around this Hall today shows just this: new faces and new friends. To all of you I say: welcome to the global family. New friends and old, we will work together to ensure that the shifts taking place across the globe result in stable and prosperous democracies; continued growth and development; and the protection and promotion of human rights for the citizens of the world.

We welcome our newest Member State, South Sudan, to the United Nations. In doing so, it must also be acknowledged that the issue of Palestine will be particularly crucial this session. I look forward to working with all Member States for the attainment of a just and comprehensive negotiated peace settlement in the Middle East, based on a two-state solution. I am fully committed to proceeding in a transparent, impartial manner, and in keeping with the expressed will of the collective membership. Fairness and justice will be key pillars for any sustainable political endeavour.

Excellencies, Heads of State and Government, Mr. Secretary-General, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

Addressing the critical issues on the agenda of the 66th session of the General Assembly will require political will, open dialogue, close collaboration, and consensus-building. For this reason, I am deeply committed to working with each of you, the Member States, as well as with all major stakeholders, to build bridges for a united global partnership. In carrying out our joint responsibilities, I place great value in South South and triangular cooperation, as well as dialogue among civilizations and advancing the culture of peace. I intend to accord the most vulnerable countries the much needed support they deserve. Let us always bear in mind the need for solutions that are just and fair and based on the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter.

In meeting the expectations of the world, it is our responsibility to be thoughtful and targeted in our approach. For this reason, I have identified four key areas to help frame our work this session: the peaceful settlement of disputes; UN reform and revitalization; improving disaster prevention and response; and sustainable development and global prosperity.

Regarding UN reform and revitalization, this session we must continue our efforts to revitalize the General Assembly, so that it maintains its rightful place as the centre of global decision-making. We must make the Assembly more efficient and able to respond quickly to emerging situations of global concern. I am also fully committed to progressing previous efforts to reform the Security Council, in a manner that is based on the collective will of the Member States.

On improving disaster prevention and response, I am deeply conscious of the tragic food and humanitarian crisis gripping Somalia. This session I will be fully committed to focusing the General Assembly's attention on this humanitarian crisis. I will count on your support and attention in improving our response to humanitarian disasters. And I will work closely with Member States to further improve prevention and reduce risk and vulnerability to natural hazards.

And regarding sustainable development and global prosperity, as the world population reaches 7 billion next month, our efforts in this area will be ever-more pressing. This year there will be a number of major global conferences related to sustainable development. These will focus on issues such as climate change and desertification, poverty eradication and achieving the Millennium Development Goals. I urge you, leaders of the world, to find consensus and take strong and urgent action to ensure fruitful outcomes at these important meetings. I remain committed to supporting these discussions in any way I can.

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The theme before us today is the "The role of mediation in the settlement of disputes."

The United Nations' role in promoting international peace and security stands as foremost among the reasons for its founding. From the very beginning, mediation has been one of the key tools for the peaceful settlement of disputes, with a specific reference in the United Nations Charter.

In today's world, the need to find peaceful resolution of disputes has become more relevant and urgent than ever. This is why I proposed this theme for the General Debate. I look forward to hearing from you, the Member States, your valuable views and experiences. They will be very useful for the General Assembly for its deliberations in the upcoming year. I am also pleased that this issue is being dealt with by the Security Council, which will hold a special meeting on preventive diplomacy tomorrow.

It is clear that the United Nations brings legitimacy and operational breadth to mediation efforts. I am pleased to note that in the preceding session, the General Assembly adopted its first-ever resolution on mediation. With this resolution, the General Assembly took an important step in affirming support for

strengthening mediation as a vital tool for conflict prevention and resolution. Member States also committed to raising the visibility of this matter.

It is of the utmost importance that Member States are actively engaged in the implementation of this resolution and are involved in future activities of the General Assembly in the field of mediation. I also welcome and appreciate the recent developments within the United Nations system.

It is my intention to give high priority to mediation throughout this session, to galvanise this theme and operationalize it for a real multilateral capacity with the support of Member States. I will do so in a transparent and interactive manner, by ensuring close coordination with the Secretary-General, Member States and other relevant actors.

Excellencies, Heads of State and Government, Mr. Secretary-General, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

It is pertinent that the leaders of the world are gathered here today on the International Day of Peace - a day dedicated to realizing the ideals of peace both within and among all nations and peoples. Let us join together in the spirit of cooperation and partnership, to ensure peace, prosperity and dignity for all of humanity.

I look forward to a very successful debate. Thank you.