

# United Nations Nations Unies

THE PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

LE PRESIDENT DE L'ASSEMBLEE GENERALE

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## **Statement of H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, President of the 66<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly, at the Informal Discussion on United Nations Mediation**

His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished participants,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon, and welcome to this informal discussion.

“The peaceful settlement of disputes” is one of my four key areas of this session. Between now and next September, I plan to hold a number of events on the topic of mediation. This discussion marks the first such meeting.

Today, we will discuss thoroughly and in an informal setting, the United Nations’ role in mediation. Our aim is to contribute to furthering this important matter, following the landmark resolution adopted on June 22nd. It was the same date when I was elected as the President of the General Assembly.

While mentioning this resolution, let me express my appreciation to the Group of Friends of Mediation, co-chaired by Turkey and Finland, for initiating and leading the entire process.

We will take up today’s subject through three main perspectives: prevention, peacemaking and peacekeeping.

Among the distinguished panelists and other participants, we have current and former high-level officials of the United Nations, as well as academics and representatives from civil society who have broad experience on different aspects of mediation. With their participation, we will be able to conduct an in-depth and rich discussion.

Over the last few years, there has been a growing interest in mediation within the United Nations system, among Member States and other actors. This encouraging trend, as well as my firm belief in the critical role of mediation for peaceful resolution to disputes, led me to suggest the theme “The role of mediation in the settlement of disputes” for the General Debate for this session.

I was humbled by the support and appreciation for this topic at the General Debate. We heard the views of Member States, which was very useful for all of us.

They also shared the experiences from their own regions. Some came up with specific proposals. For instance, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines suggested that the theme of the General Debate become a resolution. Turkmenistan proposed starting the elaboration of a declaration, along with other useful suggestions by Member States.

I will follow-up, within my purview, these and other points and proposals raised at the General Debate.

I am pleased by the fact that the Security Council has been paying special attention to mediation in the last months, focusing on different angles of the matter. Following the high-level meeting on preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution in September, the Council held an open debate in October, where the need for strengthening the role of women in mediation processes was highlighted.

The interest of both the General Assembly and the Security Council in mediation is no surprise. Because mediation and other peaceful tools are at the very heart of the United Nations. The world is going through a particularly difficult time and transition, and the United Nations can - and should - play an important role in resolving disputes and conflicts world-wide.

In the past, the United Nations initiated, undertook or was involved in several mediation efforts, either through the good offices of the Secretary-General or Special Representatives and Envoys. Sometimes mediation endeavors are carried out by regional, sub-regional organizations, national actors or by civil society. However, we have seen that even in such situations, the support of the United Nations was still necessary. During today's discussion, we will also hear some cases from our distinguished panelists to this effect.

The United Nations has a comparative advantage. It provides international legitimacy to a specific mediation process. Thanks to the recent efforts by the Secretary-General to strengthen the United Nations' mediation capacity, the UN system is now supporting Member States and other actors in a more effective manner through its able staff, equipped with broad expertise.

However, the United Nations faces a number of challenges here in the Headquarters and on the ground.

For instance, with the growing number of mediation actors, is the United Nations still the *primus inter pares*?

In spite of recent improvements, is the capacity of the United Nations sufficient, and how can it be further strengthened?

What are the lessons learned from past mediation efforts?

Our panelists, some of whom are current and former high-level officials of the United Nations, will elaborate on these and other questions and challenges. Following the panelists' presentations, we are looking forward to an interactive discussion with the representatives of Member States and other invitees.

Today's discussion, I hope, will also contribute to the preparations of the guidance requested by the resolution adopted in June. I believe this guidance will be a useful tool for mediators at various levels.

Thank you.