

15 November 2011

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser,
President of the 66th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Opening of the Meeting of the Religions for Peace Middle East–
North Africa Council**

I wish to thank you for your kind invitation to participate in the meeting that Religions for Peace is convening in Marrakesh, Morocco, on November 15-16, on the contribution of religion to understanding and peace in the Middle-East and North Africa.

It is with deep regret that I have to inform you that because of the heavy demands of my office in this crucial period of the work of the General Assembly, I will not be able to attend.

I would like however to congratulate you and your colleagues in the religious community for your efforts to help build understanding, tolerance, mutual respect and prosperous societies in the region.

The religions in the Middle-East and North Africa are great historic sources of the cultures of the region. They have helped to shape the mentality of the peoples, including their strong commitment to justice and mutual respect. These religions continue to shape the hearts and minds of millions of people across the region.

As you and your colleagues attending the Marrakesh meeting work to discern shared moral values related to respect for different religions, it is important for all religious groups to unite on the basis of these shared values to help build flourishing communities committed to a just peace across the region.

Please share this message with the participants in the Marrakesh meeting and convey to them my best wishes and encouragement as you undertake your important work.