

21 November 2011

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser,
President of the 66th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Memorial Event paying Tribute to Fallen UN Colleagues**

Mr. Secretary-General
Mrs. Ban,
Madam Under-Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen, UN colleagues around the world,

The United Nations family has suffered tragic losses in the recent past.

Peacekeepers in Darfur, trying to keep IDPs safe.

Staff in Abuja, victims of terrorism.

Colleagues in Kinshasa, traveling by plane.

Since March 2010, 195 of our colleagues have given their lives in service to our organization.

Today, we gather here to pay tribute and to honor the memory of these brave and beloved friends and colleagues.

I would like to express my deepest respect and gratitude to those who have served the UN around the world - far from their countries and loved ones - and who have suffered the ultimate sacrifice.

Their work and dedication underpins the core mission of the United Nations: the promotion of peace, security and prosperity worldwide.

Allow me to also honor those two colleagues who lost their lives in the Afghanistan United Nations Guest House attack in 2009. I understand this is the first memorial event organized for these colleagues. Though some time has passed, we have not, and will not, forget their courage nor their dedication.

The presence of the United Nations on the ground helps in stopping the escalation of confrontations.

It saves the lives of countless men, women and children worldwide.

It paves the way for the peaceful settlement of disputes, one of my key priorities during my presidency.

It helps to rebuild communities after conflict.

And it improves the lives of populations, including the most vulnerable.

All of this could not be achieved without the tireless work of our staff - all the peacekeepers, military, police and civilians - serving under the UN flag.

From Congo to Kosovo, from Haiti to Afghanistan, for more than half a century, our men and women have never hesitated to move into some of the world's most challenging environments.

And wherever they have gone in the cause of peace, our colleagues have made real and lasting contributions to the lives of people in need.

Today, the UN presence in the field faces many trials around the world.

And thus, even while we acknowledge the many strengths of our efforts, we are collectively entrusted with ensuring the continual improvement of the unique global partnership.

It is the people we are sending to assist who ask, rightly, that conditions be as effective and safe as possible.

I would like to underscore that the safety and security of UN personnel – civilian and uniformed – must be a top priority for all involved: the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Secretariat.

To this end, we have to work closely with host countries, who bear the primary responsibility for safety and security on their respective territories.

We also should spare no effort in ensuring that our missions have the level of resources – human and material – that provide the best possible levels of security.

I commend the Secretariat's work in pressing forward the implementation of the safety and security policies and procedures established through the Inter-agency Security Management Network.

Full implementation across all missions will allow better assessment of the risks associated with UN operations in the field and, thereby, lead to better operational decision-making.

Distinguished guests,

For all the men, women and children whose lives are richer and safer thanks to the dedication of our staff, there have been those who were lost – the United Nations personnel who sacrificed their lives for a truly noble cause.

As we remember our fallen colleagues, we are all encouraged by their remarkable dedication.

And we are inspired to work even harder for the collective cause envisaged in the United Nations Charter: to keep peace and to promote better standards of life in larger freedom.

Thank you.