

5 December 2011

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser,
President of the 66th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Tenth Anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers**

Dr. Asha-Rose Migiro, United Nations Deputy Secretary-General,
Ms. Flavia Pansieri, Executive Coordinator of the United Nations Volunteers,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Today we celebrate the tenth anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers.

We come together to pay tribute to millions of volunteers around the world. Men and women who show that every citizen makes a difference and that volunteerism matters.

Volunteerism matters in reaching United Nations targets, such as the Millennium Development Goals, humanitarian response, poverty reduction, and sustainability.

Volunteerism involves overcoming social exclusion and discrimination, strengthens values based on collaboration and partnership, and helps to build a better world.

Today the global community faces a myriad of challenges – from environmental disasters, conflicts, humanitarian emergencies, the financial crisis, to political transitions.

All of these have the power to destabilize communities and undermine the hard-earned gains of the past decade. We must, therefore, realize that common challenges require common responses for our common future.

Rising to these challenges demands solidarity, creativity, engagement, and partnership from all segments of our society. With the world population now at 7 billion, it is important to leverage resources in ever better and more effective ways.

Volunteering is the people-centered approach to peace, humanitarian response, and sustainable development.

It strengthens trust, solidarity and reciprocity among citizens.

It empowers change from the grassroots up, especially when enabled by strong partnerships at every level.

The United Nations Volunteers programme, established forty years ago, deploys about 8,000 volunteers every year. Through UN agencies, funds and programmes, peacekeeping and special political missions, UNVs contribute to the UN's global agenda and support national development efforts.

The contribution of volunteers has not, however, been sufficiently recognized to date.

And we must change that.

Let us join together to support volunteer action as a vast and powerful resource of social engagement and transformation.

Commemorating the tenth anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers provides us with the opportunity to reinvigorate the spirit of volunteerism through collaborative action among governments, the UN system, civil society, and the private sector in order to share ideas, expertise, and experiences.

By acknowledging the value of volunteerism to societies, we can facilitate volunteering at local, national, regional, and global levels through the development of more conducive policies.

In this respect, I look forward to the launch of the first "State of the World's Volunteerism Report" and its suggestions on how to take volunteerism forward and move it into a new era.

Together, let us commit to promoting and supporting volunteerism as an important factor to the achievement of international peace and development.

In closing, I would like to thank our unsung heroes – all the volunteers worldwide for contributing their time, talent, knowledge, and energy to promoting a better world.

We salute your tireless efforts and honour you today!

Thank you.