

23 December 2011

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

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The main part of the 66th session of the General Assembly draws near to a close.

Just as I speak, the members of the Fifth Committee are working tirelessly, negotiating on the issues of critical importance to the Organization including the biennium budget 2012-2013. The negotiation process on the biennium budget has been particularly challenging this year in the wake of global financial challenges.

I commend the efforts, robust and constructive engagement of all delegations including the able stewardship of the Chair of the Fifth Committee and his Bureau.

Having just met with the Chair of the Fifth Committee, I am confident that the Fifth Committee will reach consensus on entire set of its agenda including the biennium budget earliest by this evening.

Before the General Assembly plenary would resume for adopting the reports containing the recommendations of the Fifth Committee, I would like to take this opportunity to share a few observations of our work thus far.

First let me express my sincere gratitude to every delegation. Your constructive spirit, dedication, and hard work were invaluable to our success.

I would like to thank the Vice-Presidents, who have supported me throughout this session.

I am grateful to the Chairs of the Main Committees and other Subsidiary Bodies, and their Bureaus, for their leadership and commitment.

We should not forget that I have appointed a number of facilitators to support the implementation of various General Assembly mandates this session. These facilitators are among you, they are your peers, and I encourage you to lend them your support and your flexibility.

As always, our work would not have been possible without the excellent support of the Secretariat, led by the United Nations Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, and his Under-Secretary-

Generals, particularly Mr. Shaaban Shaaban. I would like to thank the Secretariat staff, including the interpretation services, and their Directors for the care, professionalism and long hours they put into making this session run smoothly and seamlessly.

I began this session in September by saying that the world is facing unprecedented challenges: environmental, economic, social and political. Peoples' demands around the world for good governance and prosperity are stronger and louder than ever before.

I also remarked that our actions today will define our place in this decisive moment in history. I called upon each of you to work together to build a truly united global partnership, so that we can move forward the Assembly's agenda this year.

I firmly believe that you rose to this challenge. The Assembly acted in concert on many of the major issues of our time and so far adopted around 300 resolutions and decisions in total.

On Libya, the Assembly restored the legitimate representation of the Libyan people to the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council. Accordingly, the international community is now responding to the aspirations of a new, free Libya. As you are aware, I myself made a joint visit to Libya with the Secretary-General on 2 November, to demonstrate the UN's strong support for the Libyans, as they embark on this critical journey of reconciliation, democracy and reconstruction.

On Syria, the General Assembly expressed its concern regarding the ongoing developments in the country. On 19 December, the Assembly adopted a resolution condemning the continued grave and systematic human rights violations committed by the Syrian authorities, and calling upon them to implement the League of Arab States' Plan of Action in its entirety. To keep the whole membership informed, I immediately transmitted the report of the independent international commission of inquiry from the President of the Human Rights Council, as well as the report of the Human Rights Council on its special session of 2 December. I hope that the killing and violence in Syria will immediately come to an end, in keeping with the calls of the international community.

The issue of Palestine has been particularly central this General Assembly session. We witnessed an historic development here in New York when the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, transmitted Palestine's application for Membership to the United Nations to the Secretary-General on 23 September.

On 29 November, many Member States and I reaffirmed our solidarity with the Palestinian people. A number of important resolutions on Palestine were examined by several Committees and adopted once again this year. It is my conviction that the General Assembly should continue to work collectively for the attainment of a just and comprehensive negotiated peace settlement in the Middle East.

I would also note here that the Israeli construction of settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the Occupied Syrian Golan, is of particular concern. I would urge the Government of Israel to freeze all settlement activity, as it contravenes international law and the Roadmap.

In keeping with the four pillars I outlined for our focus this session, enormous efforts have been made and progress is still underway. I would like to highlight some particularly notable achievements.

The first pillar, “The peaceful settlement of disputes”, reflects my firm belief in the role of mediation to resolve conflicts. Encouraged by the growing need for mediation, I suggested the theme for the General Debate: “The role of mediation in the settlement of disputes”. I am thankful to world leaders for elaborating on this matter by sharing their perspectives and experiences, as well as by making specific suggestions.

To assist with moving this issue forward, on 9 November I organized a fruitful dialogue on “United Nations Mediation: Experiences and Reflections from the Field”. I invite all Member States and partners to consider the summary from this event, and to benefit from the valuable lessons shared. This event was a first step, with others to follow.

In a related context, I addressed the Fourth Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations on 11 December, reiterating the need for youth participation in efforts to advance cross-cultural understanding and sustainable development. As a follow-up to the Doha forum, I will organise in March 2012 an interactive debate on fostering cross-cultural understanding for building peaceful and inclusive societies. Special attention will be given to the role of youth.

Reaffirming its commitment to follow-up on the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, the General Assembly adopted by consensus a resolution emphasising the need for their full and effective implementation. I call upon governments, the Secretary-General and civil society to actively implement this important Declaration and Programme of Action, thereby demonstrating commitment to the promotion of tolerance and non-violence.

Related to my second pillar, “UN reform and revitalization”, the formal debate on revitalizing the work of the General Assembly was held on 1 December. Here, the Membership reflected its desire for and commitment to a strengthened, responsive, more efficient and effective General Assembly.

On the question of the equitable representation on, and increase in, the Membership of the Security Council and related matters, Member States considered this issue on 8 November. On 14 November, I addressed a Security Council reform workshop in Tokyo. This workshop was followed on 28 November by the first meeting in the eighth round of the Inter Governmental Negotiations, conducted under my auspices. I encourage Member States to continue to actively participate in these negotiations. This, I hope, will help pave the way forward, based on the collective will of the Member States. In continuing my attention to this subject, I am organizing a retreat on Security Council reform, scheduled for early next year, intended to consolidate as much as possible the various positions on this important issue.

Under my third pillar, “Improving humanitarian prevention and response”, there is no doubt that a consolidation of efforts is required to address more frequent and intense natural disasters, such as we have recently seen in, for example, Haiti, Pakistan, Japan, Turkey, Thailand, and just this past weekend

in the Philippines. In this respect, I plan to organize a thematic debate on disaster prevention and response in the Spring of 2012.

The devastating situation in Somalia is of course at the fore of our minds and hearts. Urgent support is needed in Somalia, to protect starving populations who are facing indescribable humanitarian disaster. As you are aware, I undertook a joint visit to Somalia with the Secretary-General on 9 December. The visit reaffirmed that the UN and the international community stand behind the people of Somalia in the tremendous challenges they face. I re-iterated in my meeting with Somali government officials that the implementation of the Roadmap adopted last September is the way forward.

Great strides have been made under my fourth pillar “Sustainable development and global prosperity”. Last September, the first-ever high-level meeting on desertification was held. It was followed in October by the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification in the Republic of Korea, which I addressed and presented the high-level meeting summary. At both events, world leaders stressed that desertification is not only harming people but it is harming our development and our future, and that addressing desertification is an issue of high priority.

In the lead up to the UN Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio next June, much work has been done by the Second Committee and the Preparatory Committee for Rio plus 20. On 17-18 December, I convened a retreat on “Paving the way for a successful Rio plus 20”, to encourage broader agreement on the Conference’s outcome.

We have also had a number of meetings and briefings on sustainable development. In Durban, Member States agreed to work towards a new global treaty. Member States also participated in the second dialogue between the General Assembly and the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Global Sustainability; the briefing on Sustainable Energy for All; and an informal interactive briefing in preparation for consideration of the Secretary-General’s annual Report on accelerating progress towards the MDGs post-2015.

Turning to macroeconomic issues, given the General Assembly’s preeminence as the legitimate centre of global decision-making, I convened pre- and post-G20 Summit briefings. Here, I encouraged all major groups to cooperate in addressing the challenges of the international economic and financial system. The Assembly also held its Fifth High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development.

At the Global South-South Development Expo in Rome, I reiterated my conviction that South-South and triangular cooperation, backed by adequate funding, are key tools for tackling the development challenges of our time.

In addition to work under these four pillars, significant progress was also made in other areas as well. To mention but a few:

Disarmament, in particular nuclear disarmament, remains high on this session's Agenda. Revitalization of the disarmament machinery, including the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, remains one of the key requirements to advance this goal. This session, First Committee delegations had a very

intensive and constructive exchange on these topics. Accordingly, I intend to visit and address the Conference on Disarmament in January, with a strong supportive message promoting positive action aimed at revitalizing the Conference.

The political will expressed at the High-level Meeting on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases in September was a major breakthrough by the international community in protecting the world's most vulnerable populations. I call on all partners to work closely with the World Health Organization to ensure the implementation of the political declaration, and I stand ready to support you in anyway that I can.

At the commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, the political declaration, adopted by consensus, reaffirmed our collective commitment to prevent, combat and eradicate racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

By adopting resolution 66/10, we welcomed the recent establishment of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Center at UN Headquarters. I encourage all Member States to collaborate with the Center in contributing to the implementation of its activities in support of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

And we marked an historic milestone in human development: we are now 7 billion people strong.

Also this session, in the context of the Tenth Anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers on 5 December, we celebrated the contribution of millions of men and women who selflessly dedicate their time, knowledge and energy in supporting UN goals and promoting a better world.

The United Nations family has suffered tragic losses in the recent past. During our memorial service on 21 November, we gathered at Headquarters to pay tribute and honor the memory of 197 brave and beloved friends and colleagues. I underscore again that the safety and security of UN personnel, civilian and uniformed, must be a top priority for us all.

As I've said since the outset, I believe strongly in the value of partnership. In keeping with my commitment to expand and strengthen our global partnership, I held in October an interactive dialogue and lively discussion with members of civil society and the private sector.

Going forward, a lot of work remains to be done. I will soon communicate directly to the Missions the informal activities I intend to organize in 2012. I will also work closely with Member States in preparation of the high-level meetings in the 67th session, including the high-level event on the rule of law, and any other events that may arise.

In carrying out these endeavors, I look forward to working with each of you and to making even greater strides next year.

As members of the chief deliberative and policymaking organ of the United Nations – not to mention the most representative and universal body in the world, and the birthplace of international law - it is our shared responsibility to make peace and prosperity a reality for all.

I thank you and extend to you my best wishes for a happy, healthy and peaceful New Year.