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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 66th Session of the General Assembly, at the Opening of the Dialogue with Civil Society

Good afternoon friends and colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

No dialogue is complete without the voice of civil society.

So I am delighted to see you here today.

It shows commitment.

And it shows that civil society is an important partner for UN Member States, and vice versa.

It is your organizations that often work closest with communities and national governments. You are at the forefront of service delivery.

We appreciate your efforts and contributions.

It was important to me that I took advantage of my time in Geneva, to exchange priorities and to consider how we can be complementary in our efforts.

To begin, I would like to make some brief remarks about the role of the President of the General Assembly. You may also be interested to learn about the four areas of focus that I have selected to guide the General Assembly's work this session. We will then open the floor for discussion.

The General Assembly is of course the world's chief deliberative and policy-making body. It represents all 193 Member States, who have an equal voice in global decision-making under the UN Charter.

The interests, concerns and views of such a large body are diverse and sometimes not in agreement.

My primary job as President is therefore as a mediator and a facilitator.

I work closely with all Member States to help find common understanding.

My aim is to promote consensus in intergovernmental negotiations.

The Membership has also requested that Presidents of the General Assembly organize thematic debates.

These debates are an opportunity for Member States and key partners to meet in an informal setting to exchange ideas and lessons learned, and to advance issues of common concern.

The role of the President also involves many formal, ceremonial and diplomatic functions.

One such function is to lead discussions in General Assembly meetings.

Another is to enhance the visibility of the Assembly worldwide- hence my presence in Geneva!

In approaching my responsibilities as President, and to help frame the Assembly's work this session, I have identified four pillars. These are:

First, the peaceful settlement of disputes.

Second, UN reform and revitalization.

Third, improving disaster prevention and response.

Fourth, sustainable development and global prosperity.

In addition, for this year's General Debate I proposed the theme "The role of mediation in the peaceful resolution of disputes". In today's world, this topic is more relevant and urgent than ever.

I have held, and will continue to hold, informal meetings and retreats on these issues throughout the 66th session. These informal meetings and retreats are an opportunity for Member States and partners to come together to further mutual understanding and consider how we can turn our words into actions.

To engage with the processes of the General Assembly, there are a number of important mechanisms available to civil society.

Regular interaction between civil society and my Office is most welcome.

One forum that has proven helpful in the past is civil society hearings.

Here, civil society actors not only identify and report on situations of common concern. They also make recommendations that will be given due weight when decisions of the Membership are made.

For the thematic debates that I am convening this session, I warmly welcome the participation of civil society.

You also have other forums for engagement.

These include the work of the Assembly's Main Committees and events mandated by the Assembly, such as commemorative meetings.

I am pleased that this year, as a result of the General Assembly's recent review of the work of the Human Rights Council, the first interactive dialogue was held between the President of the Human Rights Council and 3rd Committee delegates in New York.

Such measures are important strides towards strengthening coordination and dialogue between Geneva and New York.

In closing these brief remarks, we are all deeply aware that our world is currently undergoing a period of profound change and uncertainty. The global environment poses new challenges to multilateralism. It requires the international community to work together and to find creative solutions.

Our progress will largely depend on the strength of our global partnership. My team and I stand ready to work closely with you, to ensure that you play an integral role in this partnership.

I have also appointed a Special Coordinator for Civil Society, Mrs. Hanifa Mezoui. Unfortunately Mrs Mezoui could not join us in Geneva today, but she is a good friend of your community. She will follow up on the modalities of our cooperation, encouraging you to bring forward creative proposals.

I thank you for your attention and look forward to our discussion today.

Thank you very much.