



**President of the General Assembly  
His Excellency Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser**

**Remarks**

**Fordham University: Occasion of the Conferring of the Degree of  
Doctor of Laws, honoris causa  
On the PGA**

**12 September 2012  
New York**

President McShane, Chairman of the Board of Trustees,  
Members of the Board of Trustees  
Provost Freedman,  
Deans,  
Faculty and friends.

I am truly honoured to be with you this afternoon.  
I am proud to be a member of the Fordham family.  
A day after my election as the 66<sup>th</sup> President of the United Nations General Assembly, the very first address I gave was at Fordham's Lincoln Centre campus. It was for the commencement ceremony of your distinguished International Diploma course in Humanitarian Assistance, which has over 2000 graduates from 133 countries.

On that day, Fordham conferred on me an International Diploma, honoris causis. So, today I join you as a Fordham alumnus.

A diplomat's constant effort, often behind the public glare, is to search for peace where there is war, to find solid bases for consensus, for mediation and, even better, for the prevention of conflicts. But diplomats do not deal solely with dangerous differences between States. They spend much of their time, at least at the United Nations, trying, with civil society, and NGOs to help the disenfranchised, to address forgotten issues.

As specific examples during my Presidency, we fostered programmes to raise awareness of the terrible scourge of violence against women. We sought to ensure that the mentally-disabled are not left out of global health plans, and that non-communicable diseases, NCDs, such as obesity and diabetes, receive proper recognition as growing epidemics. We made certain that the most vulnerable - the millions of refugees and internally-displaced persons that shame our civilisation - receive our support. And this work is not done only in grand conference halls and official meetings.

During my tenure as President I have personally witnessed the price of our failures in the streets of Mogadishu, and in the Dadaab camp in Kenya where over half-a-million people, the vast majority being women and children, struggle, every day, to survive. I also went to Libya to represent the world community just after the fall of Qaddafi and witnessed first hand the devastation left behind by an ugly dictatorship. These journeys provide essential legitimacy for diplomatic initiatives.

This brings me to the role of academia in diplomacy. Around the world, universities provide the necessary ambience and resources for the study and analysis of past experiences, to learn lessons in order to design better plans and practical guidance for future efforts. Universities offer an ideal place for perspective, for sharing wisdom, understanding and encouraging dialogue. These are essential building blocks as we strive to strengthen those "bridges to peace" that are at times elusive. Nonetheless, this is the common ground that we diplomats require to craft workable treaties, conventions and laws.

Throughout my diplomatic career my overriding goal has been to work with both scholars and practitioners to build alliances that can overcome cultural barriers and result in a civilisation that unites rather than divides, one that can truly celebrate the diversity of the human race as we continue the endless struggle for a more equitable world where justice and peace might reign.

To achieve this noble goal I shall continue and strengthen this partnership with universities, especially Fordham, as new duties and assignments

allow me to focus on the complex interrelationships of civilisations and the need plus opportunity to create alliances among people who have known too much destructive isolationism.

I will be pursuing this now as an official member of the Fordham family for I have agreed to serve as a Diplomat-in-Residence at your Institute for International Humanitarian Affairs, and I have asked Dr. Cahill, the Director of the Institute, to serve as my Senior Advisor on Academic Affairs.

One again, President McShane, Trustees, Faculty and friends, I express my gratitude to you for this high honour.

Let us renew our resolve, as scholars and diplomats, to work for the advent of a better world.

**END**