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General Assembly President stresses role of UN in problem solving



Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, President of the General Assembly. UN Photo/Rick Bajornas

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The President of the General Assembly Nassir Abdulaziz Al Nasser today underlined the United Nations' central role in building world peace through dialogue and consensus by bringing countries together to find common solutions for problems that face humanity.

“The United Nations may, at times, appear to be considering issues that seem unrelated to our daily lives,” said Mr. Al-Nasser in a lecture at New York University (NYU) on the theme of ‘The United Nations General Assembly and the Business of Universality.’

“In fact, we are tackling those matters that define the lives of all of us. More often than not, the UN is at the forefront of developing a vision for the future,” he said.

He gave the example of the gathering of world leaders at the General Assembly in September to deliberate on the non-communicable diseases (NCDs) epidemic – heart disease, cancer, chronic lung diseases and diabetes.

“We agreed to act. The international community committed itself to develop national capacities for addressing NCDs, and to strengthen national NCDs policies and plans,” said Mr. Al-Nasser.

“There is power in these collective commitments. They offer support to governments in developing policies. They also create space for sharing ideas and best practices.”

He also made reference to the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), a commitment made by world leaders at the UN World Summit in 2005 for States to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

The commitment also obligates the international community, through the UN, to use appropriate diplomatic, humanitarian and other peaceful means, to help protect populations from mass atrocity.

“We have just seen in Libya the critical role of R2P,” said Mr. Al-Nasser. “We have seen the Security Council’s timely and resolute response in the face of an imminent threat of mass atrocities. And we have seen the UN’s central role as a moral authority.”

He pointed out that while it would be intellectually and morally dishonest to pretend that the ideals of the UN Charter and of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights have been fully realized, the two documents offer the world a chance to achieve shared values.

He praised NYU’s role in promoting international education, exposing humanity to different cultures and ways of life.

In an apparent response to the often heard criticism that the UN appears slow in its actions, Mr. Al-Nasser reminded his audience of the General Assembly mission to seek the consensus of the 193 Member States.

“Because universality is not a given. 193 countries implies 193 governments. 193 national economies. And how many cultures! And how many historical experiences! And how many national interests! Yet, this is our business everyday,” he said.

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