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## Assembly chief opens annual UN debate with pledge to partner for peace



President of the 66th General Assembly Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser

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Welcoming world leaders to the United Nations, the President of the General Assembly today opened the annual high-level debate with a pledge to build a global partnership to ensure peace, prosperity and dignity for all.

“Let there be no doubt that 2011 is the year of new horizons,” said Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser of Qatar. “New friends and old, we will work together to ensure that the shifts taking place across the globe result in stable and prosperous democracies; continued growth and development; and the protection and promotion of human rights for the citizens of the world.”

Mr. Al-Nasser said that addressing the critical issues on the agenda of the Assembly’s 66th session will require political will, open dialogue, close collaboration, and consensus-building. As such, he voiced his commitment to working with all Member States, and with all major stakeholders, to build “bridges for a united global partnership.”

The President has identified four key areas to help frame the work of the current session: the peaceful settlement of disputes; UN reform and revitalization; improving disaster prevention and response; and sustainable development and global prosperity.

The Assembly must continue its efforts to revitalize the 193-member body so that it maintains its rightful place as the “centre of global decision-making,” he said. “We must make the Assembly more efficient and able to respond quickly to emerging situations of global concern.”

On improving disaster prevention and response, the President said he is fully committed to focusing the Assembly’s attention on the tragic food and humanitarian crisis gripping Somalia, where millions are suffering from famine, conflict and drought.

“I will count on your support and attention in improving our response to humanitarian disasters. And I will work closely with Member States to further improve prevention and reduce risk and vulnerability to natural hazards,” he stated.

Mr. Al-Nasser noted that, as the world population reaches 7 billion next month, the Assembly’s efforts in the area of sustainable development and global prosperity will be “ever-more pressing.”

Pointing to the major global conferences related to sustainable development that will be taking place in the coming months, the President also urged world leaders to find consensus and take strong and urgent action to ensure fruitful outcomes at important meetings focusing on issues such as climate change and poverty eradication.

More than 120 heads of State and government are slated to address the Assembly during the debate, whose theme this year is: “The role of mediation in the settlement of disputes.” The Security Council will also be dealing with this issue when it holds a special meeting on preventive diplomacy tomorrow.

“In today’s world, the need to find peaceful resolution of disputes has become more relevant and urgent than ever,” said Mr. Al-Nasser, adding that “it is clear that the United Nations brings legitimacy and operational breadth to mediation efforts.”

He noted that the Assembly, in its previous session, adopted its first-ever resolution on mediation, with which it took an important step in affirming support for strengthening mediation as a vital tool for conflict prevention and resolution.

It is pertinent, he added, that world leaders are meeting today on what is observed annually as the International Day of Peace – “a day dedicated to realizing the ideals of peace both within and among all nations and peoples.”

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