

59TH ANNUAL DPI/NGO CONFERENCE

6 – 8 SEPTEMBER 2006

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS: EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS FOR
HUMAN SECURITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

Opening Session:

Wednesday, 6 September

10:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Conference Room 4

Scenario

Welcoming Remarks

Raymond Sommereyns

Director, Outreach Division

United Nations Department of Public Information

[10:08 a.m. Safety officer takes the floor to briefly explain security procedures

- 10:12 audio-visual introduction (duration 6'20")

- Raymond Sommereyns comes up to the podium after the audio-visual presentation and is seated at centre on podium]

[10:20 a.m.]

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Friends and Colleagues,

Good morning, my name is Raymond Sommereyns and I am the Director of the Outreach Division in the Department of Public Information. It is my privilege to welcome you to this Conference on behalf of Under Secretary-General Shashi Tharoor, who is away from Headquarters.

Thank you for joining us. The audio-visual piece we just saw, entitled “How are you? The Millennium Development Goals” was produced by Girl behind the Camera Productions during the 58th annual DPI/NGO Conference, and was scheduled to be screened during the closing session of last year’s Conference. Those of you, who attended that event, may remember that due to technical difficulties we were -----
regrettably --- unable to see this moving, and still very relevant work. I am delighted that we had the opportunity to view it today.

Let me now welcome all of you gathered here this morning for the opening session of the 59th Annual Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations associated with the Department of Public Information, entitled “Unfinished Business: Effective Partnerships for Human Security and Sustainable Development”. Thanks to all of you who have come from around the world to participate in this three-day meeting and to those who will be watching the proceedings via a live webcast, available at the Conference website. Let me also remind our online participants that they will be able to submit questions online in real time to the speakers of the plenary session. Several United Nations Information Centres around the world are also joining us via video-conference during this opening session and I wish to extend a special welcome to them.

It is my understanding that more than 2,500 NGO representatives had registered to participate in the Conference in advance. As of this morning, close to 1,000 representatives of more than 300 NGO and civil society organizations from about 50 countries have arrived to New York and already picked up their passes for the Conference. About a fifth of all registered participants are youth representatives. I also would like you to know that for the first time in the history of the Conference, the registration process was environmentally friendly by allowing participants to register online.

I am pleased to welcome about 60 speakers ---- representing the United Nations, governments, civil society, NGOs and the private sector ---- who will address this audience with specific examples of effective partnerships to achieve Millennium Development Goals as the title of the Conference itself suggests. Each panel and roundtable will also feature a youth speaker.

This year, the number of roundtables rose from four to six, covering issues from education, health, human security to civil society partnerships, poverty and cultural diversity. As they will take place simultaneously in clusters of three, you will only be able to participate in two. The six moderators, however, will return to the podium once again during the closing session on Friday, and provide summaries of their respective roundtables. Every day at lunch time, you will also be able to participate in one of ten daily midday workshops. Several other side events will provide more opportunities for networking and partnership-building.

At this point, I would like to invite the President of the 60th Session of the General Assembly, His Excellency, Mr. Jan Eliasson, to join me at the podium.

[RS pauses and waits for GA President to join him at the podium; when GA President seated to his right, RS continues]

It has become a tradition that the President of the General Assembly addresses the DPI/NGO Conference. We are grateful to him for his commitment to the United Nations and his devotion to the work and significance of the partnership between civil society and this organization

Mr. President, the floor is yours.

[10:35 a.m. - 10:50 a.m. GA President speaks]

[10:50 a.m.]

Thank you, Mr. President (comments)

[GA President leaves the podium, RS pauses until GA President has left]

As you have seen in the programme, the keynote address this morning was to be delivered by His Excellency, Mr. Evo Morales, President of Bolivia, who was going to join us via a live video conference. Unfortunately, as Head of State, President Morales had to attend to other urgent business and will not be able to join us. On his behalf, however, the keynote address will be delivered by Álvaro García Linera, Vice-President of Bolivia.

(Evo Morales has been sworn in as the president of Bolivia in January 2006. He has been the leader of the Movement towards Socialism (MAS) and his support has come mainly from the coca-growing areas of central Bolivia. After the violent death of

a coca farmer in central Chipiriri in 1981, he had promised to fight for human rights, peace, freedom, and the right to cultivate the coca leaf as a natural resource for the dignity of Bolivians.

In 1985, Mr. Morales became Secretary of the San Francisco Union. He was elected in 1988 to the position of Executive Secretary of the Tropics Federation. In 1995 and 1996, he was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize by international politicians and academics for his leadership of a non-violent movement against the War on Drugs. President Morales is an Aymara Indian and is the first indigenous person to be elected to Bolivia since modern times.)

Vice-President, thank you for joining us on such short notice and welcome to the United Nations!

[11:00 a.m. - 11:20 a.m. Vice-President speaks; RS leaves the podium to watch his speech from the audience; he returns to the podium after Vice-President finishes]

[11:20 a.m.]

Thank you, Mr. Vice-President (comments).

Today, we also have a special message for you, which will be delivered by Mr. Katsutoshi Kaneda, Senior Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Government of Japan. While I am introducing Mr. Kaneda, I would like to invite him to join us up here at the podium.

[Mr. Kaneda is escorted to the podium; RS waits until Mr. Kaneda seated on his right]

Mr. Kaneda has been involved in areas of economic cooperation, disarmament and non-proliferation and has taken a leading role in putting human security, a pivotal issue in Japan's foreign policy, into practice at the field level. He has been actively involved in coordinating reconstruction assistance for Afghanistan and Iraq. In Japan's reform of its official development assistance policy, Mr. Kaneda has advocated public-private partnerships with NGOs for sustainable development.

As budget examiner, Mr. Kaneda has overseen budgeting for several government bodies, including the Environment Agency, the National Land Agency, the Ministry of Justice, and the Economic Planning Agency. During his tenure as Parliamentary Vice-Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries, he was active in food security issues. As Director of the Health, Labour and Welfare Division of the Liberal Democratic Party and Chairman of the House of Councillors' Committee on Health, Welfare and Labour, he strived to build a safe society and to create people-centred policies. Mr. Kaneda was also a visiting Research Fellow at Princeton University's Center for International Studies.

Mr. Kaneda, the floor is yours.

[11:25 a.m. - 11:40 a.m. Mr. Kaneda speaks]

[11:40]

Thank you Mr, Kaneda. (comments)

[Mr. Kaneda leaves]

We now have the opportunity to hear from elected NGO representatives from the NGO community associated with the United Nations. I would like to invite Ms. Joan Kirby, Chair of the NGO/DPI Executive Committee; Ms. Renate Bloem, President of the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CONGO); and Ms. Michaela Walsh, the NGO Chair of the Conference to join me on the podium.

[Ms. Kirby is seated on RS's right, Ms. Walsh on RS' left and Ms. Bloem on RS's second right; once all seated, RS continues]

First, I would like to introduce Ms. Joan Kirby, who is the Chair of the NGO/DPI Executive Committee and the United Nations representative of the Temple of Understanding. The Executive Committee works with more than 1,500 NGOs associated with the Department of Public Information and is a co-organizer of the Annual DPI/NGO Conference.

Ms. Kirby was the Executive Director of the Temple of Understanding from 1994 to 2000 where she developed

educational interfaith programmes for people of different religious traditions. In collaboration with the Auburn Theological Seminary, she sponsored a programme of immersion in seven different religious traditions and developed a programme called Universal Meditation Masters with the Tibet Center. Ms. Kirby served as the Secretary for the NGO Committee on Human Rights and is the Vice President of the Committee of Religious NGOs at the UN where she works with the Tri-Partite Forum for Interfaith Cooperation for Peace. Ms. Kirby, welcome!

[11:45 a.m. - 11:55 a.m. Ms. Kirby speaks.]

[11:55]

Thank you, Ms. Kirby (comments)

Our next speaker this morning is Ms. Renate Bloem, President of the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CONGO) based in Geneva. Ms. Bloem has worked with the NGO community as a representative to the United Nations for the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women as well as with CONGO as President of the Geneva-based NGO Committee on the Status of Women. [Ms. Bloem is escorted to the podium.]

Ms. Bloem is a member of the Coordinating Committee of the NGO Forum on Health and of the International NGO

Coordinating Committee for Beijing+5. She is also a Convener of the CONGO Working Group on Girls. As a human rights advocate focusing particularly on the rights of women and children, Ms. Bloem was involved in drafting the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Ms. Bloem, you have the floor.

[12:00 a.m. - 12:10 a.m. Ms. Bloem speaks.]

[12:10]

It is my pleasure to introduce the final speaker of this opening session, the Chair of the Conference and Co-chair of its Planning Committee, Ms. Michaela Walsh. Ms. Walsh is the United Nations representative of Manhattanville College in Purchase, NY, where she is the Director of Women's leadership. She has combined a career in investment strategies with wide experience, both professional and pro bono, in the non-profit sector.

Ms. Walsh was the first woman manager of Merrill Lynch International and the first woman partner of Boettcher and Company. She helped formulate the Rockefeller Brothers Fund's strategy to encourage innovative and small scale sustainable projects worldwide. Ms. Walsh is also the Founding President of Women's World Banking, a unique agency providing women, particularly in Third World countries, with access to credit and financing.

Ms. Walsh, the floor is yours.

[12:15 a.m. - 12:25 a.m. Ms. Walsh speaks.]

[12:25]

Thank you, Ms Walsh. (Comments)

As we conclude this opening session, I would like to thank all those who have participated in this morning' session for setting the tone of this Conference. If the quality of this assembly is indicative of the Conference, I am sure that we will have a most remarkable three days.

There are a couple of logistical matters that I wish to share before ending. [If any, these will be provided on the morning of the Conference].

/End opening session.