

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**MESSAGE TO SYMPOSIUM  
IN COMMEMORATION OF THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY  
OF THE ADDRESS OF POPE BENEDICT XVI  
TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED NATIONS  
New York, 16 April 2009**

*Delivered by Mr. Terje Roed-Larsen, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General*

It is a great pleasure to send my warmest greetings to the Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See and all the participants in this symposium, which commemorates the visit of His Holiness to the United Nations one year ago.

As Secretary-General of the United Nations, I represent a secular institution, composed of 192 States, with six official languages but no official religion. Yet His Holiness and I share many common values, above all a belief in the inherent dignity and equal rights of every human being. We also share a commitment to the fight against poverty and inequality; to conflict prevention and the responsibility to protect; to efforts to stop the spread of nuclear weapons; and to human rights, justice and the rule of law. This forms a broad basis for joint advocacy and cooperation.

His Holiness has spoken especially movingly about the need for global cooperation to end poverty. At a time of economic crisis and rising hunger, we must redouble our efforts to protect those most in need – the bottom billion. We cannot afford to see a reversal of recent hard-won gains toward the Millennium Development Goals, such as increases in school enrollment for girls and inroads against the spread of AIDS and other deadly infectious diseases. There is a real risk of a full-blown political crisis marked by growing social unrest, weakened governments and angry publics who have lost faith in their leaders and their own future. That is why, at the G-20 Summit in London earlier this month, I pressed so hard for agreement on urgent, collective action to safeguard the well-being of all the world's people. Our job, now, is to ensure that the commitments made in London are translated into action.

In his address last year, His Holiness also spoke about the importance of inter-religious dialogue. Building respect and trust between people, and good neighbourly relations among states, is essential not only for stability, but in order to collectively address the grave, unresolved challenges of our times. We need to be able to put our best feet forward, as a united human family. Toward that end, I was also grateful to His Holiness for acknowledging the work being done by United Nations staff around the world, and his call for a strong United Nations.

Dag Hammarskjöld once said, "The United Nations stands outside -- necessarily outside -- all confessions. But it is, nevertheless, an instrument of faith. As such it is inspired by what unites and not by what divides the great religions of the world."

In that spirit, I look forward to continuing to work with His Holiness and the great diversity of humankind to build a world of lasting justice and peace. Please accept my best wishes for a memorable symposium.