



**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY
AMBASSADOR DUMISANI S. KUMALO, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS:
APPOINTMENT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS
(New York, 14 December 2006)**

Madame President,

Once again, we thank you for having given us an opportunity to honor the legacy of our beloved Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan for one last time.

Madame President,

In one of the finest moments of the United Nations under the leadership of Kofi Annan, the largest number ever of Heads of States and Government came to New York in September 2000 to attend the Millennium Summit. They adopted an historic Millennium Declaration which among other things stated *“we believe that the central challenge we face today is to ensure that globalization becomes a positive force for all the world’s people. For while globalization offers great opportunities, at present its benefits are very unevenly shared, while its costs are unevenly distributed.”*

With those few words, the Heads of State and Government attending the Millennium Summit captured what I believe to be what Secretary-General Kofi Annan was essentially about. That is, Kofi Annan tried his best to give globalization a human face. He was in the forefront of the struggle against poverty and underdevelopment. At the same time, he stood tall in defense of the much challenged multilateral rules-based system even in difficult times. Throughout the fight for global economic and social development, the Group of 77 and China is proud and honored to have been among the foot-soldiers of “general” Kofi Annan. We are pleased to have supported the Secretary-General in protecting the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations that guide the work of this General Assembly.

Madame President,

On such a special and historic occasion when we witness the eighth time in which the Office of the Secretary-General will receive a new occupant, there are not enough words that could describe the way we feel. On the one hand, we are proud that Kofi Annan, the son of African soil has served the world with honor and has now reached the point where he can move to a more relaxed, and I dare say, a predictable future, that lies ahead. On the other hand we are delighted that the great continent of Asia has once again given to this Organization one of its best and capable sons in Secretary-General-elect Mr. Ban Ki-moon to whom we pledge our support in helping him achieve the best for this Organization.

Madame President,

Long before globalization brought us instant communication technology that often leaves us with less time to think or analyze what we have to say, people around the world used to write letters to each other, even to the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

I hope, Madame President, you will allow me read my letter to Secretary-General Kofi Annan, a

letter that I believe captures best the feelings many of us have for him.

Dear Secretary-General,

Many words will be spoken today and in the near future about how much we will all miss you. It is true that your calming influence and wisdom, indeed your inspiration and dignity will be greatly missed. But the greater truth is that those whose hearts will be worst torn asunder by your departure are the poor and the underprivileged of this world. They include millions whose lives are withering away under the onslaught of curable and incurable pandemics such as HIV/Aids and Malaria.

I also dare say that on 31 December 2006 when you leave office, the light of hope for the people of Palestine who live under occupation will shine even less bright.

One thing you can take away from New York with great pride is that throughout your term you always kept faith with the downtrodden and underprivileged.

You always spoke softly but your voice was loudest when you fearlessly told the truth to the powerful reminding them never to forget those who are called "the least among us". Even when circumstances forced you to stay quiet, your silence was even louder.

Today the world is engaged in a race to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, albeit a very slow race at this time. The fact, however, is that we are able to discuss the development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, because of your leadership and commitment to the poor.

You have also helped change the global dialogue by forcing us to focus simultaneously on three challenges – the security challenge, the development challenge and the challenge of upholding human rights and the rule of law. With great passion, you have made a convincing argument that there can be no security without development and that neither can be enjoyed without human rights and the rule of law.

In short, you were always one of us. We are privileged to have known you.

In conclusion, may I remind you that five years ago you accepted the Nobel Peace Prize on behalf of this beloved United Nations to which you gave more than forty of the best years of your life. In the Nobel lecture that you delivered in Oslo, Norway, you began by saying:

"Today, in Afghanistan a girl will be born. A mother will hold her and feed her, comfort her and care for her just as any mother would anywhere in the world. In these most basic acts of human nature, humanity knows no divisions. But to be born a girl in today's Afghanistan is to begin life centuries away from the prosperity that one small part of humanity has achieved. It is to live under conditions that many of us in this hall would consider inhuman. Truly, it is as if it were a tale of two planets."

One of the most eloquent and gifted souls to come from that part of Asia you referred to in your Nobel lecture is none other than the mystical poet Rumi. In his writings and poems, Rumi captured the life of ordinary people and spoke of unity and togetherness.

Speaking of togetherness, I cannot end your tribute without at the same time saluting Mrs. Nane Annan whom you have called your life partner, your strength and your friend who has been with you even in the darkest days. For us watching you from afar, we will never forget how Nane has always been at your side exuding quiet strength and sending a message to all of those who come

to serve this United Nations with spouses and families that there is life beyond the resolutions, the declarations and the endless meetings in the basement of this Assembly. For that we thank her.

So, in celebration of a job well done, and in recognition of your tireless efforts to strengthen the United Nations, allow me to end up by offering you a gift of the words of Rumi who is the spiritual great-grandfather of the girl born in Afghanistan that you recalled in your Nobel lecture. The words of the poet Rumi recognise that even though there may be a public and private life, there is only just one existence that is captured in the moment.

Rumi says:

“Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and right doing,
there is a field. I’ll meet you there.

When the soul lies down in that grass,
the world is too full to talk about.
Ideas, language, even the phrase *each other*
doesn’t make any sense.”

With these words allow me once again on behalf of the Group of 77 and China to say goodbye dear friend.

PS. By the way, you can relax wherever you go. Your legacy and your achievements are now in the good hands of Mr. Ban Ki-moon who we will support just as we did you.