



**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR DUMISANI S. KUMALO PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF SOUTH AFRICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS AND CHAIRMAN OF THE GROUP OF 77 AT THE PRESENTATION OF THE 2006 INTER PRESS SERVICE INTERNATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD HONOURING MR. KOFI ANNAN, SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS (New York, 19 December 2006)**

Secretary-General,  
Mr. Mario Lubetkin, Director-General of IPS  
Members of the Board of IPS,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me to speak at the Inter Press Service Award Ceremony recognizing Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his lasting contributions to peace, security, development, gender empowerment and human rights.

Of the Inter Press Service, it is said that when a group of brave and independent journalists led by among others, Mr. Robert Savio an Italian freelance journalist, came together more than 40 years ago, they were convinced of the need to provide an independent view of the events that shocked humankind and offer a different voice among the mass media, one free of ties to any state or political or economic group.

In the past 20 years, the IPS has sought out many well-deserving recipients of the IPS Award whose voices have not been silent about the conditions of the poor and marginalized people of the world. I believe that in honouring Kofi Annan with the International Achievement Award for 2006, the IPS may have finally honoured one who not only personalises the vision of its founders but perhaps one of its most deserving recipients.

The only other Secretary-General of the United Nations to receive this Award was Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali in 1996. In his acceptance speech, he said, “the press must tell the story of the developing world. It must call for economic and social justice. It must insist upon standards of good governance. And governments will come to support the press as a powerful instrument serving the interest of the people.”

In our usual UN-speak, Kofi Annan implemented the message of Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali by becoming the voice of the voiceless that the media could not easily ignore.

In one of his memorable statements as Secretary-General, Mr. Annan told the Millennium Summit on 6 September 2000 that “In an age when human beings have learnt the code of human life, and can transmit their knowledge in seconds from one continent to another, no mother in the world can understand why her child should be left to die, of malnutrition or preventable disease.

“No one can understand why they should be driven from their home, or imprisoned or tortured for expressing their beliefs. No one can understand why the soil their parents tilled has turned to desert, or why their skills have become useless and their families left hungry.

“People know that these challenges cannot be met by one country alone, or by the government alone. Change cannot be held back by frontiers. Human progress has always come from

individual and local initiatives, freely devised and then freely adapted elsewhere.”

Of course, the IPS had been telling the same story since its founding. But, the stories of the developing world are not easy to tell. They are complex and do not lend themselves to easy headlines.

And this has been successfully exploited as an advantage by the developed countries that have relied on their global media companies to tell their side of the story. Even those of us serving in the UN have often been reduced to searching for the morning headlines in the newspapers, radios or television to find out which issues we are supposed to support or oppose. Even our own Capitals are reduced to learning about issues being debated in the UN from the perspective of the international media companies of the developed world that are often used to set the agenda at the UN.

It has therefore been helpful and even refreshing that Kofi Annan was available to tell the other side of the global story that often was not in line with the accepted international consensus carefully cultivated by the major powers using their international media companies.

One big story that will always be associated with Kofi Annan is on the reform and revitalization of the United Nations that he began soon after assuming office ten years ago. Of course, renewing an intergovernmental organization such as the United Nations was bound to be complicated and difficult. But Kofi Annan never shied away from difficult and complicated issues.

Personally, I believe that he was driven by his commitment to the Charter of the United Nations, especially the determination set out by the peoples of the world who adopted the Charter more than sixty years ago. In part, the Charter states:

*to reaffirm faith in the fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.*

Throughout his reform proposals, Kofi Annan not only kept faith with the fundamental human rights and the dignity and worth of the human person, but he promoted gender equality at every level in the Organization despite the bureaucratic challenges he faced in the UN system. The fact that today many people expect the Secretary-General designate, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, to appoint women among his senior advisers, including a Deputy Secretary-General who may be a woman, is precisely to live up to the standard set by Kofi Annan.

Millions of people who live on less than one dollar a day, are anxiously waiting to see how much of the Millennium Development Goals will ever be met in their own lifetimes. That is thanks to Kofi Annan.

Policy-makers now accept that security has to be linked to development and both can only be guaranteed by the implementation of human rights and the rule of law. That is also thanks to Kofi Annan.

Yet, one reform that Secretary-General Kofi Annan has always promoted has received less attention than it deserves. That is the expansion and reform of the Security Council in both permanent and non-permanent categories. While Member States have failed to achieve this

reform during Kofi Annan's term, I am among those that believe this issue will in the near future receive the attention it requires.

Meanwhile, whenever people around the world read about any crisis or disaster, whether it be on the situation in Iraq, the deteriorating humanitarian conditions in Darfur, or the suffering of people in Lebanon or Gaza, they accept such reports but only believe them after having heard Kofi Annan's side of the same story.

I believe this is one of the reasons that the IPS has concluded that Secretary-General Kofi Annan deserves its International Achievement Award for 2006. For the rest of us, we are just pleased to have been present at such an important occasion.

I thank you.