

Beat: Vips

Opening remarks at opening of 66th Annual UN DPI/NGO Conference

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

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USPA NEWS - Opening remarks at press conference at opening of 66th Annual UN DPI/NGO Conference by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Gyeongju (Republic of Korea), 30 May 2016 :

Good afternoon,

Before I begin speaking about this important DPI/NGO Conference, let me say a word about the latest deadly attack...

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Good afternoon,

Before I begin speaking about this important DPI/NGO Conference, let me say a word about the latest deadly attack on our peacekeepers in Mali.

We are still getting details of this very serious incident. The latest report I have says that five peacekeepers were killed in an ambush.

They were heroes who had gone to Mali to make it safer and more stable for the country's suffering people. They made the ultimate sacrifice as the world marked the International Day of Peacekeepers.

I have conveyed my sincere condolences to the families of these courageous blue helmets. The United Nations will never forget their sacrifice.

I am urging action to bring the perpetrators to justice as quickly as possible. They did not just target the United Nations; they took aim at our universal values. We must respond forcefully.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am very happy to be here at this dynamic DPI-NGO Conference.

As you may know, this is the first time that the UN DPI-NGO Conference is being held in Asia. I am also very happy that the first meeting is taking place in my home country, Korea, and in particularly in Gyeongju.

Let me express my deepest thanks to the leaders and people of Gyeongju for their warm hospitality and strong support.

I am particularly pleased to convene the 66th UN DPI-NGO Conference in Gyeongju, the capital of the Silla dynasty, which lasted for a thousand years. Its outstanding cultural artefacts still stand today.

The United Nations highly values the contributions of non-governmental organizations.

This Conference is a reminder of the power of NGOs to shape our common future.

And it is a chance to strengthen our resolve to enable NGOs everywhere to operate freely.

Governments must listen to the voices of their people. NGOs can often link communities and officials. But they can only play their role when they have freedom to operate.

I am deeply concerned to see democratic space shrinking in some areas.

We cannot allow this authoritarian impulse to silence NGOs.

As I said in my speech today, we have seen a disturbing pattern of actions against NGOs whose work is essential to progress.

This is happening around the world "" and, unfortunately, even within the United Nations.

I am dismayed at the latest example. After six years of delays, a majority a Member States on the ECOSOC NGO Committee voted to deny the Committee to Protect Journalists consultative status.

Around the world, media workers are being targeted. Press freedoms are being restricted. An appalling number of journalists have been murdered or unjustly imprisoned.

The media are our eyes and ears. Journalists expose truths and uncover stories that we need to know. They risk their lives for the public's right to truth.

I am opposed to any restrictions on journalists "" and I am against any limits on organizations that protect them. The last place this should happen is at the United Nations.

We must help these valuable organizations gain material support and political backing.

Of course not everyone will agree on every issue "" but we should all agree on the need for open dialogue.

The United Nations is proud to serve as a forum for dialogue among the world's NGOs.

This Conference should forge a strong outcome.

The United Nations will continue strengthening our proud partnership with the NGOs represented here "" and others around the world which share our vision of a life of dignity for all.

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