Address at the Annual Memorial Service to Honor UN Staff Members who died whilst Serving the Organization by H.E. Mr. Abulkalam Abdul Momen Acting President of the United Nations General Assembly
19 August 2013
[CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY]

[Mr. Secretary-General, Madam Ban Soon-taek,
Distinguished Guests, Families and Friends of the deceased,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,]

We come together in solemn remembrance of 30 colleagues who lost their lives while serving the United Nations over the past year and the 22 who perished on this day a decade ago following the tragic bombing of the UN Offices at the Canal Hotel in Baghdad.

As members of the UN family, it is our duty but also a source of pride to reflect on the selfless conduct of these men and women who sacrificed their lives in the service of this august organization.

Although ten years have passed since the attack on the UN in Iraq, the day remains etched in our collective memory, a haunting reminder of the dangers that our staff members and friends continue to face every day in some of the world’s most dangerous environments.
All the men and women who have died whilst serving under the United Nations flag demonstrated the noble traits of devotion, bravery and self-sacrifice that distinguish them as servants to the ideals of the UN.

Some were peacekeepers; others police officers; still others civilian staff members. They each embodied the values of our organization.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
All acts of violence against United Nations personnel represent an attack at the heart of the organization. As we agreed in the Charter, the United Nations is the covenant of the civilized nations. So any attack on its personnel is tantamount to as an attack on human civilization. The United Nations, as the harbinger of this ethos, is relentless in carrying through this flag of humanity withstanding, at times, fatality of its members. We take pride that, their sacrifice haven’t gone in vain. Since its inception on the vestige of the League of Nations at the wake of WW II, this organization has been a huge success to protect and preserve the world from the pangs of a third world war.

While we are proud of these accomplishments, the needless death of colleagues is profoundly felt by UN staff in every corner of the world. We mourn this loss together and through our shared grief can draw strength from the knowledge that they died defending our commonly-held aspirations towards development, security and human rights.

As we grieve alongside the families of the fallen we can reflect on their achievements and in so doing ask ourselves how we can better serve the cause of peace and reconciliation. Our pledge to carry on their work is perhaps the most meaningful memorial to these brave and dedicated men and women and the clearest affirmation that they did not die in vain.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
I would like to reiterate that the safety and security of UN personnel remains the highest priority for the General Assembly.
I call upon all Member States that host UN field missions and offices, to ensure the security of our staff be they military, police or civilians.

On behalf of the President of the General Assembly, I would like to underline the importance of both training and providing UN personnel with adequate equipment to fulfil their mandate.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In a short while we will hear the names of our 52 colleagues we are remembering today. In our thoughts and prayers, let us take time to thank them individually for their personal sacrifice and service to the world community of nations.

In my own name and that of my staff, and on behalf of the General Assembly, allow me to express my deepest condolences to the families of the deceased, and to their friends and colleagues.

I would like to leave you with, what I find to be comforting words. They were written by the 19th century Irish poet, Thomas Moore.

Peace to each manly soul that sleepeth,
Rest to each faithful eye that weepeth.

May our colleagues rest in peace--- Ameen.

Thank you all.