

October 7 Book Launch/United Nations, New York

Your Excellency, Kiyotaka Akasaka, Under-Secretary General for Public Information

Your Excellency, Sergio Duarte, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I have been journeying to the United Nations several times a year for 35 years as a parliamentarian, ambassador, adviser and an NGO. I have listened to world figures from Mikhail Gorbachev to Ronald Reagan and Pope Benedict XVI speaking at the great podium in the General Assembly, and even given a couple of speeches there myself. I have known and followed the leadership of five Secretaries-General, Kurt Waldheim, Javier Perez de Cuellar (who gave me an autographed copy of the U.N. Charter in the six official languages), Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Kofi Annan, and Ban Ki-moon. I have attended U.N. meetings in Geneva, Vienna, and Nairobi and traveled to U.N. health and community centres in the rural regions of Bangladesh, Peru, India and a score of other countries. I chaired the U.N. Disarmament Committee in 1988. The United Nations is part of me. I cannot, and do not desire to, get it out of my system. The United Nations is a gift to humanity. In fact, it has lifted up humanity.

I am aware of the U.N.'s faults and mistakes. However, I am not neutral concerning the existence of the U.N. In its global strategies for disarmament, economic and social development, environmental protection, and the advancement of human rights, the U.N. has responded to the aching desires for peace and true human security that lie in the breasts of billions of human beings. There is not a person on the planet who is not affected, one way or another, by U.N. programs.

So what is it I'm dissenting from – to refer to the title of my Memoirs? I dissent from the anti-humanitarian policies of war for peace. I dissent from the perpetuation of poverty through the greed of the rich. I dissent from the despoliation of the planet by short-sighted industrialism. Most of all, I dissent from the fabric of lies spun by the proponents of nuclear weapons who would have us believe that these heinous instruments of mass murder make us safer.

I am in good company in this dissent because Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, in opening the 63rd General Assembly, also pointed to these perils. He said: “We face a global financial crisis. A global energy crisis. A global food crisis. Trade talks have collapsed, yet again. We have seen new outbreaks of war and violence, new rhetoric of confrontation. Climate

change ever more clearly threatens our planet.” Then he pointed – diplomatically – to “a challenge of global leadership.”

Ban Ki-moon offers the creativity of the United Nations. This is the approach I have taken in my political career – dissent followed by creativity. I would like to tell you more, but I mustn't – I want you to buy the book.

Thank you all.