Mr. Douglas’s acceptance remarks

Mr. Secretary-General, Angela Kane, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, my fellow honoree - Mr. Stevie Wonder, honored guests, ladies and gentleman. United Nations Correspondents Association I am grateful for this honor, but more importantly, I want to pay tribute to all of you, the correspondents.

I want to thank you for giving disarmament a voice. Without your dedication, there would be no global understanding of human kind’s most pressing issues. And without your commitment, efforts of the United Nations and Secretary General Ban Ki-moon in tackling these issues would lack global reach. They would be far less powerful. By making people worldwide aware of the works of the United Nations, you benefit the world.

Disarmament lies at the core of mankind’s quest for peace. It is one of the foundations of the UN. A community awash in illicit guns is less likely to be a secure place for people. A nation awash in conventional weapons- tanks, mines, cluster bombs, fighter jets – whether they are used against external enemies or internal populations, is much less likely to be a secure place for people. A world awash in thousands of nuclear weapons and hundreds of thousands of missiles capable of carrying them long distances is less likely to be a secure place for its people.

But it is not only a question of the weapons themselves; it is also a question of the resources- monetary and human-that go into developing, building, maintain the weapons. This does not even begin to factor into equation, the billions of dollars that have been spent and will be needed to rebuild societies shattered by conflict and violence.

Disarmament goes beyond eliminating weapons. It is also about creating opportunities to think about security in new ways, to re-prioritize our budgets, and to re-think our sense of ourselves as global citizens.

I am a fan of Buckminster Fuller, who spoke of our world as “spaceship earth” – a manned dot in relation to a universe that so far shows no other sign of life. How are we and our leaders so disrespectful of this extraordinary gift?

Knowledge and information, and not weapons, are the true sources of power. Hence, your extraordinary journalistic work empowers the global community to critically engage in discussions that are crucial for finding solution to the most pressing problems. More than once
you have set the agenda for what the world community talks about. More than once, this talk had yielded concrete results, which contributed to making this world a more secure and peaceful place.

Consider, for example, the land mine ban convention, or the convention on cluster munitions, and ask yourself, whether these great achievements could have ever been reached, would it not have been for the extensive media coverage on children, women and men, who became victims of these horrendous weapons.

But the world still is full of instruments of war. And states across the globe keep spending hundreds of billions on military expenditures. This calls upon all of us to do everything within our capacity to reverse this trend and facilitate disarmament.

I know some press conferences seem redundant and peace seems so far away, but global citizens could never pursue their missions without you, the correspondents. It is you who make the voices heard, and for that I am grateful and applaud you. Thank you.