Dearest Cora, my friends in the NGO community, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

May I begin by saying how overwhelmed with emotion Maureen and I are by this heart-warming gesture of the NGO community, led by the redoubtable and remarkably dynamic Cora Weiss, whose Hague Appeal for Peace remains a beacon in the peace and disarmament field.
I had originally planned to speak from the heart and without a script, as befits an informal occasion like this. After some reflection, however, I decided that there was a real danger that the heart may take over completely. And so, in order that I may speak to you both from my heart and my head - which on most occasions reach a consensus with the intervention of the keeper of my conscience, my wife - I have decided not to engage in the "unscripted reactivity" that I have recently been witness to at the NPT Prepcom in Geneva but rather to speak from a script. This will ensure that in an emotionally charged occasion for me, I will still be able to share some thoughts based on my experience of working in the United Nations.

It is entirely appropriate, and not without significance, that one of my final statements in New York, in my present capacity, should be made under the aegis of the Non-governmental organizations. For, as I have often said, the NGOs have been the wind under my wings - especially during the last five years when some may have wanted to clip those wings! Like the United Nations, civil society transcends the parochialism of narrow national interests. And like the Pope, in Stalin's famous riposte, civil society has no armed divisions. As a former resident of Geneva I recall the seductive advertisement of a Swiss bank at the Geneva Airport, which read "Money talks, but wealth whispers". In a realpolitik-soaked United Nations power speaks but influence lingers. And so, long after the headlines of wars and crises fade away and the short attention span of Governments and the media move on to other issues, what the value-based NGOs have said and done will linger in the consciences of us all.

Like the United Nations, the NGOs do not represent the national interest of any one country or group of countries, however powerful, rich, or indispensable they may consider themselves to be. They represent the collective, non-sectarian global interests of the peoples of the world, which is more, much more, than the sum total of the national interests of the nation states of the world. That cannot please the jingoists and the proponents of civilizational supremacy. Civil society challenges the monopoly claim of governments - especially the unelected and undemocratic ones - to be the sole interpreters of the national interests of their people. NGOs support the transcendental values of global society. They represent civil society and express global public opinion, which both Secretary-General Kofi Annan and the New York Times have described as the other super-power.

But, to continue to exert that invaluable influence, civil society must not only keep governments and the United Nations honest and faithful to their ideals and their mandates. It must also remain honest to itself - uncorrupted by pressures of power politics, the lure of being sub-contracted by powerful interest groups or being seduced subtly by individual ego-trips. Let me use this platform to urge once again for the NGOs in the disarmament field the same rights and privileges that are extended, for example, to those in the human rights field. This includes participation in debates and full access to delegations and documents. The voice of NGOs must be heard in all disarmament fora however inconvenient and awkward it may be to some governments. As we have seen in Geneva at the last NPT Prepcom, the NGOs have a wealth of ideas, proposals and research findings to bring to the table. There should be no artificial obstruction preventing this wealth from being more amply articulated. Rules of Procedure are not
set in concrete. They can be changed - they must be changed - for us all to advance the cause of multilateral disarmament.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I recall that when I assumed my functions as Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament, I said, in one of my first statements to the NGO community, that I sought neither to build empires nor to engage in turf battles. I hope that now, at the end of my tenure, I will be judged to have been honest in maintaining that pledge. It has not been easy, however, to conduct the affairs of the smallest department in the UN Secretariat in the face of progress-resistant budgetary procedures, patronizing attitudes from our big brothers and sisters and the blurred jurisdictional lines of the bureaucracy. And yet, whatever has been achieved in these last five years in the re-established DDA with which I was entrusted, has been accomplished with the extraordinary teamwork of my staff at Headquarters, in Geneva and in the field.

I want here to recognize publicly their sterling contributions and to express to those of them who are present amongst the audience, my deep gratitude and appreciation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The sovereign equality of member states of the United Nations is a cardinal principle enshrined in Article 2:1 of the Charter. It is a democratic principle that sets us apart from the Bretton Woods Institutions where he who pays the piper calls the tune. It is also - sadly but indisputably - one of the more glorious myths of this world body as we have seen demonstrated recently. I am, therefore, especially grateful to Secretary-General Annan for having appointed me - a national of a small developing country with little political influence and less economic muscle, contributing 0.016% to the UN Budget - to a position at the high table of the Senior Management Group.

However, at the end of ten years with the United Nations - five in Geneva as Director of the UN Institute for Disarmament Research from 1987-92 and five more in New York as USG/DDA - I remain gravely concerned that the gap between the advocacy of the concerns of the vast majority of the Global South - from whence I came and whither I will return - and the actual redressing of these concerns is growing. We have only to view the actual record of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals; the obscene disparity between the cost of one unilateral military action and the global resources allocated to urgent human security needs; and the rapidity of radar screen changes in the priorities of the poor, the sick, the homeless and dispossessed to realize the under-achievement of this great organization.

The causes lie not merely in the aggressive pursuit of national interest to the detriment of global welfare, or the decision-making structure of the Security Council, the reform of which has long been on the UN agenda. It is also evident in the agenda setting in recent times and resource allocations to programmes. Some say this is a political organization and that we must accept this skewed playing field as a fact of life. I disagree. The largest taxpayers and the
poorest citizens in a democratic country are on a level playing field in the polling booth. The United Nations represents the aspirations of the poor and the weak. There is no other safety net for them. We cannot preach good governance to member states if we do not practise it in our own organization. We can and must balance the norm-based idealism of the United Nations with the interest-based realism of the rich and powerful. The drafters of the United Nations Charter, I believe, created a harmonious system of checks and balances in which no component would have overwhelming power over the others, be it the Security Council, the General Assembly or the Secretariat. We need to return to the roots of the Charter in the post Iraq war period. It would be the only way, the best way, of satisfying all the members of the international community. To engage in Charter revision so as to legitimize the self-righteous, neo-conservative view that might is right is a roadmap to disaster.

The Secretary-General’s second wave of reforms published last year rightly recognized the need to improve the management of trust funds, which number over 200 tDDAy. That task has now begun. It must ensure that the priority items of the UN agenda are funded first, rather than have donor-driven priorities established, distorting the UN’s agenda. I do not refer to the Funds and Programmes, which must of course rely on voluntary funds. It is significant that for the current biennium of the UN Secretariat, of the total resources budgeted 39.7% comes from the Regular Budget and as much as 60.3% from Trust Funds. For the forthcoming 2003-4 Biennium while 42% is budgeted expenditure from the Regular Budget, 58% comes from extra-budgetary resources. As at June 2002, out of a total of 15,633 staff in the UN Secretariat 7,469 (48%) were paid from the Regular Budget and 8164 (52%) were financed from extra budgetary resources. This trend can have ominous consequences.

Why is it that the Member States who balk at paying higher assessed rates to the regular budget or demand lowering of their assessed rates, are so keen to maintain Trust Funds pursuing their priority agenda items in a form of "a la carte multilateralism"? The present situation opens the way for competition among Department Heads for extra-budgetary funds and for compromises to be reached aggravating democracy-deficient and opaque practices. Accountability standards must be the same for both Regular Budget and Extra-budgetary resources. I am confident that the internal review going on within the UN will result in beneficial reforms and effective controls. They should.

Let me now turn more directly to the role of the UN in Disarmament. This role covers a gamut of issues - from weapons of mass destruction through missiles and small arms to confidence building measures like transparency. The relentless advocacy, consistent implementation and objective monitoring of the norms that exist, and assistance in future norm-building, must encompass this entire range. There are some, I know, who would like DDA to be re-directed into the cul-de-sac of small arms and light weapons alone. This I have resisted. The disarmament component of the Millennium Assembly Report of the Secretary-General may have been confined to small arms proliferation had not DDA made its own contribution to the Report. It was a contribution that the Secretary-General unhesitatingly accepted and it enlarged the scope of the disarmament agenda to rightly include weapons of mass destruction, especially
nuclear disarmament, missile defence issues and landmines. I must therefore warn against
continuing efforts, through cheque book diplomacy, to distract attention from the priorities of
multilateral disarmament, set by that unique consensus reached at the First Special Session of
the United Nations General Assembly in 1978 - the 25th anniversary of which we will observe in
a few days. There must be no empires established only for the small arms and light weapons
proliferation problem, however well funded they may be by extra-budgetary resources, while the
possession and proliferation of WMD, missiles, sophisticated conventional weapons, and new
types of weapons proceed apace, consuming a trillion dollars a year.

As I leave the UN, witnessing the debris in the aftermath of the war in Iraq and the disarray
of the global security system, many uncertainties surround the organization and the future of
disarmament. Yet I am confident that, under the wise and inspiring leadership of Kofi Annan, this
world body will together overcome the current challenges. On disarmament - the only certain
path to durable and universal security - self-interest and the human instinct for survival will finally
act as an imperative for public opinion to compel leaders to adopt restraints and reductions in
military expenditures and weapons arsenals. Until that time comes, we must transform ourselves
into "neo multilateralists" in this critical era, redefining the role of the UN and reconceptualising
the goals of peace and disarmament, which, through centuries of human existence, have had to
contend with the forces of narrow nationalisms and the primitive instinct to use force. I know we
shall overcome.