

DG/02/5
25 February 2002

STATEMENT BY VLADIMIR PETROVSKY, DIRECTOR-GENERAL
OF UNITED NATIONS OFFICE AT GENEVA, ON HIS
RETIREMENT

Following is the statement issued by Vladimir Petrovsky, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, on the occasion of the announcement of his retirement:

"My retiring from the United Nations coincides with the accomplishment of 45 years of service in diplomacy. I cannot but feel part of a working process that brings tangible and lasting results for people all over the world. Now diplomacy orchestrating and moderating dialogue between states as well as between peoples serves as a bulwark against international chaos and becomes an instrument of a significant and positive influence in world affairs. I cannot but feel a high degree of satisfaction at having contributed to diplomacy at a time of profound changes and particularly at having been part of the top echelon of the United Nations over the last decade, which has been crucial for our organization.

Under the leadership of the UN Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, the UN executive body, the secretariat, is today successfully navigating the most turbulent waters of global politics.

I feel especially satisfied with my 9 years in charge of the United Nations Office at Geneva. Drawing on the energy, enthusiasm and talent of all staff members, UNOG has continuously been able to address difficult tasks in a constructive and effective manner. Our experiences at UNOG demonstrate that the best way to handle challenges is by piloting changes on an on-going basis, anticipating problems by monitoring work in progress, ensuring swift responses, coupled with a clear overall vision of the political and diplomatic parameters.

As a result of the reforms undertaken in the 1990s, UNOG has established itself as a centre for human security. It plays a pivotal role in defining and implementing this new security paradigm that goes beyond a traditional military-political interpretation and highlights that the security of human beings is not only a question of being safe from violence, but also from hunger, disease and environmental degradation. In addition to its traditional role as a centre for norm setting and technical assistance, UNOG has become a focal point for intellectual exchange and know-how sharing and for pooling of resources and knowledge across institutional, political and national boundaries.

UNOG is actively involved in preventive diplomacy, peace making and peace building. In the last decade there were a number of different summits in Geneva. It was a special privilege for me to represent the Secretary-General on several missions to areas of conflict during my tenure, in particular to Libya and Albania.

As Secretary-General of the UN Conference on Disarmament, I had a set of particular duties and responsibilities and was naturally closely involved in the work of this unique and only forum for multilateral negotiations on disarmament and arms regulations issues, which also provides the framework for plurilateral and bilateral talks. Looking back, I have to say with a degree of personal satisfaction that we were able to negotiate the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, which was signed in 1996. There were many rewarding but also difficult moments at the Conference and that is why I very strongly advocate the adoption of a comprehensive approach to all the issues on the CD programme of work and the application of a new method of negotiation, which I call 'constructive parallelism'.

Political and diplomatic activities at UNOG have been accompanied by the introduction of a new management culture. In the area of information technology, UNOG has integrated advanced technology systems into all aspects of its operations and administration to maximize efficiency. This includes the introduction of an Intranet facility and the development of a user-friendly and interactive website. The incorporation of innovative technologies has streamlined work procedures and strengthened communication both within UNOG as well as between UNOG and external agencies.

In the management field, the close co-operation between the heads of Geneva-based UN agencies resulted in 2000 in the establishment of a mechanism for common services.

Relations with other actors in the world arena were always of paramount importance to me. I instituted a framework for informal consultations with the Council of Europe and the OSCE in 1994. This February, the EU joined this tripartite consultative process, which is now called Tripartite Plus, as an observer. We have also developed close co-operation with the OIC, the OAU, the CIS and the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie.

In 1998, UNOG initiated the *Dialogue on Peace and Research* with the Institutes of the UN system, and Geneva has been chosen as a permanent venue for such dialogues.

We always keep our door open to non-governmental structures. I firmly believe that at a time of global changes, we must take every opportunity to reach out to all alternative views and perspectives.

For a number of years, UNOG has been advancing a dialogue among

civilizations by providing an open and inclusive forum for cultural engagement. Cultural and inter-religious exchange is a particularly powerful tool for cultivating tolerance and understanding. These activities, especially in the light of recent tragic events, are becoming central to overcoming prejudice, mistrust and ignorance that all too often are sources of conflict. As such they are at the heart of our efforts to promote peace, stability and well being.

Working for the United Nations, especially in the time of unprecedented changes that we are witnessing in the world today, requires an idealistic mindset and a realistic approach to actions. Balance of interest is an enduring principle of multilateralism today. International civil servants are entrusted to serve the UN, to serve humanity. I will hold dearly in my memory the precious examples of formidable commitment and integrity which my colleagues – people I worked with in New York and Geneva – have demonstrated. I wish all of them success in their professional and private lives".

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