

Madame Deputy Secretary-General, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, Families, Survivors and Dear Colleagues.

On behalf of the United Nations Staff Union, I would like to welcome you all to this very somber occasion – a wreath laying ceremony for the 16<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the bombing of the Canal Hotel, in Baghdad.

We gather here every year in the memory of twenty-two colleagues who died in the horrific terrorist attack on 19 August 2003. This act of violence further wounded more than 150 others, some of these friends and colleagues are with us today. I am very mindful that mere words cannot match the depths of our sorrow, nor can it heal the scars of our wounded heart.

I personally knew and worked with some of our colleagues who were killed in Baghdad. I also had the honor to serve under the leadership of Mr. Sérgio Vieira de Mello in East Timor. They were exceptional colleagues and friends. They were an example to us all.

The terrorist strike on the United Nations in Baghdad was the first, but sadly not the last, massive attack that defined the essence of our purpose, its mission and the dedication of our staff and mission personnel.

It was a traumatizing moment for the whole organization, and we have learned some very difficult lessons. Can we say that we're truly doing enough to provide the adequate security necessary for our staff today? I have been reflecting on this within the last few days, and if we are honest with ourselves, the answer is no, and we are not doing enough. We have to do more to protect those colleagues around the world who continue to serve and risk their lives, on a daily basis, in some of the most dangerous places imaginable.

Someday, the voices of Bagdad will no longer be with us to bear witness. But the memory of the afternoon of August 19, 2003, must never fade. That memory must always be there for us to fight complacency and fuel our moral imagination. It must allow us to commit ourselves to change.

Since the Baghdad bombing, our United Nations staff over the years have been targeted by those who would like to weaken us and make us afraid of carrying out our duties. From Algiers to Kabul, from Mogadishu to Abuja, and most recently Benghazi, terrorists have attempted to silence and to banish us.

They will not succeed. These tragedies must not continue; and, to end them we must change and do more. If there's even one-step that we can take to prevent any future attacks such as this one, then surely, we have an obligation to try.

On August 19, 2003, the protection of the United Nations flag symbolizing humanitarian efforts, peace and security changed forever. Yet, for those who remain dedicated to these principles, let us find the courage and strength to carry on and let the blue flag of the United Nations continue to fly high as we all carry on our work.

Today, we join together to remember our fallen colleagues who pursued the call to duty. They shall not be forgotten as they rest in the sacred and blessed grounds marking their devotion to humankind around the world.

For a tribute to those who paid the ultimate sacrifice, I now have the privilege of introducing the Deputy Secretary-General. Thank you very much.

Closing the event: Thank you for gathering with us on this solemn occasion; and, may we continue to dedicate the work of this organization in the memory of these brave women and men.

They and their families will remain in our hearts forever.