



Remarks by Mr. Sergei A. Ordzhonikidze
United Nations Under-Secretary-General
Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva

Solemn Meeting

60th Anniversary of the International Law Commission

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**Palais des Nations
Monday, 19 May 2008**

Distinguished Members of the International Law Commission
Madam Federal Councillor
Madam President of the International Court of Justice
Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is a distinct pleasure for me to welcome you to the Palais des Nations for this Solemn Meeting to mark the 60th anniversary of the International Law Commission. Let me, first of all, welcome the distinguished jurists, current and former members of the Commission. Allow me also to extend a special welcome to Federal Councillor and Foreign Minister Calmy-Rey. On behalf of the United Nations, I wish to thank Switzerland for the continued interest in and generous support for the work of the International Law Commission to advance the rule of law.

It is highly symbolic that we come together in the Council Chamber of the League of Nations. The League initiated important codification work that became the basis for further efforts by the International Law Commission. The outstanding murals in this Chamber, by Spanish artist José-Maria Sert, depict what binds us together as the human family, and he devoted a special mural to The Law, as you can see at the back of the room. This is testament to the vital role that international law plays in establishing conditions for a safer, more prosperous and more just world for all.

International law is the very foundation of multilateral cooperation and action. Indeed, as set out in the United Nations Charter, one of the founding purposes of the Organization is to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained.

Over the past 60 years, the intellectual rigour and clarity of thought of the eminent legal experts in the International Law Commission have helped to shape an impressive body of modern international law and legal norms across numerous areas of international relations. Together, the instruments that spring from the debates in the Commission represent a significant codification and progressive development of international law that gives a firmer legal basis to relations among States. This has changed the world for the better.

At the same time, the Commission's complex agenda is testament to the gaps that remain in the international legal order. New challenges before the international community bring the need to expand and enhance our international legal instruments. Our increasing interdependence only serves to underline the need for global responses within an agreed legal framework. The forward-looking programme for this

anniversary celebration shows clearly that the Commission is rising to this challenge, and is committed to ensuring that it will continue to be a driving force for the rule of law.

The United Nations Office at Geneva has been pleased to host the International Law Commission and to facilitate its valuable work for most of the past 60 years. We look forward to many more years of your productive work. For the United Nations to achieve its objectives, it is crucial to uphold and reinforce international law. In this regard, I wish to congratulate the Commission and to pledge the continued support of this Office.

Thank you very much.