

Farewell Address
by
Hans Corell
United Nations Headquarters
New York, 3 March 2004
(Excerpt)

Finally, Mr. Secretary-General, Mrs. Annan – Nane, lawyer and artist in your own right,

What can one say to you on an occasion like this? To serve as the Legal Counsel of this Organization is a challenge. I can think of no more interesting charge for a lawyer than to serve the United Nations in this position at the crossroads between law and politics. The past 10 years have also seen remarkable developments in the field of international law. Let me recall one of the most significant: the establishment of the International Criminal Court.

On this occasion I would like to focus on the fact that you, Mr. Secretary-General, have really brought to the forefront the idea of the rule of law in international relations. The interest that you have shown in this matter, the understanding that you have demonstrated and the example that you have set will be of great importance in the years to come. It is crucial that Member States and the general public understand that peace and security is simply not possible without a system under the rule of law, a system in which fundamental human rights and humanitarian law are fully respected.

At the same time we should remember that a rule-based international society is not a new idea. It has been advocated for so long and by so many. Why is it that it is so difficult for some to remember? I developed my thoughts about that in my lecture in Vienna on 24 February.

When I thought about how to express on this occasion my respect, my friendship and my gratitude to you, Mr. Secretary-General, and to Nane, I came to the conclusion that the best way to do this would be through a little gift.

One experience of our cooperation that I will never forget is our visit to Baghdad in February 1998. You had decided to go there in order to solve the impasse over the inspection of the Presidential Palaces. It was a difficult and politically perilous task. Our work was intense. At one point you said to me: It often helps to pray!

I recalled that moment some time ago and thought: maybe I should give the Secretary-General a prayer! And so, I have written a prayer. But this prayer has no words. It is a piece of music that hopefully can be understood by all. And those who listen would be free to add in their minds in any language words of their own. I know that the composition is a very humble contribution to music. But so should a prayer be humble.

The music that I have composed is for the Great Highland Bagpipe. I have explained before on an occasion when the two of you were present that I view the bagpipe as a shepherd's instrument with its origins lost in the mists of time. The music can of course be played on other instruments as well.

On this occasion, I will not be playing myself. Instead, I asked my friends in the Pipes & Drums of the 1st Royal Engineers in Stockholm for assistance. I visited them on 19 February, when Pipe Major Krister Bergman, Pipe Sergeant Niklas Hannah (solo) and Pipers Patrik Enström, Gustav Sandström and Ulf Schönberg made the recording that you are about to hear. Ulf Schönberg made the sound recording and Julio Martinich made the editing.

I trust that you do not mind that I have given the copyright to UNICEF – just in case!

Let us now observe a moment of stillness while we listen to “Secretary-General Kofi Annan’s Prayer for Peace”.

Thank you!