STATEMENT AT THE INAUGURATION OF
THE UN-IRAN FRIENDSHIP ASSOCIATION

21 January 2015
UN-Iran Friendship Association, Tehran, Iran

Gary Lewis
UN Resident Coordinator
Your Excellency, Dr. Ebrahim Rahimpour, Deputy Foreign Minister for Asia-Pacific and Commonwealth Affairs

Dr. Moussavi, Chairman of the Centre for Middle East Strategic Studies

Dr. Seyedan, Vice-Chairman of the I.R. Iran’s Friendship Association

Ambassadors and members of the foreign delegations, and heads of the UN Agencies based in Tehran

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen, Salaam va Assr bekhair

I am delighted to be here today to join in inaugurating the Iran-UN Friendship Association.

I would like to begin my short remarks by commending the proposal to form this association that came – last year – from Dr. Seyed Hossein Moussavi.

The inauguration of this Association follows a pattern which reflects Iran’s outreach to other countries with similar Associations. As you have heard, over 75 such Associations have been formed in the past 10 years.

Partnerships are what MDG Number 8 is all about. And so this partnership becomes all the more important for us in the year 2015 when the United Nations marks the 70th anniversary of our founding.

What is also very important note is that Iran was present in San Francisco in 1945 when the UN Charter was adopted. Iran is a respected founder member of the UN – and thus also marks its 70th anniversary of membership in our organization.

Ladies and Gentlemen, 70 years ago, 51 founding members committed themselves to the UN Charter, which was based upon
safeguarding four priorities: peace, human rights, justice and development.

Today, the number of UN member states has nearly quadrupled to 193. And our members carry forward the same ideals in a world now consisting of more than 7 billion people.

At this time of multiple crises in the world, I believe the United Nations has an immense amount of work to do.

- Climate change
- Water shortages
- Desertification
- Pollution of our air and water
- Deadly contagious diseases
- Grave inequality
- Conflict
- And violent extremism.

These are some of what I call the mega-challenges which we face across the planet. No country can tackle these alone.

This is why we need to join hands. We need to do so within borders. And we need to do so across borders.

This is the reason for our forming this UN-Iran Friendship Association. The Association will help to raise awareness of the work of the UN among the citizens of Iran. The Association will also promote visibility for our joint achievements within Iran on development and humanitarian cooperation.

In this spirit, it is my earnest hope that the Iran-UN Friendship Association can – operating within the framework of our cooperation partnership with the Government of Iran – contribute
towards increasing cooperation between Iran and the United Nations in development and humanitarianism.

Dr. Rahimpour, in his opening statement, has reminded us of the famous words from Sa’adi about the fact that all humans come from one body – and that all suffer when one suffers. These words are, in fact, inscribed in one of the halls of our UN Headquarters in New York.

I would like to close by offering the thoughts of another of your famous poets – Rumi – who said: “it is far better than speaking the same language, that we take the time to fully understand one-another.”

So it is in this spirit that we begin this Association. And, as we commemorate the UN’s origins – as well as Iran’s 70 year partnership with the UN – let us all also take the time to promote mutual understanding with Iran and its people.

_Sepaas!_