

3 September 2003

Excellency,

We have all been shocked and deeply saddened by the wanton attack on the United Nations office in Baghdad, which caused death, injury and trauma to some of the finest women and men serving the Organization. This senseless attack heightens the need to enhance the protection provided to those who serve the United Nations, especially the staff sent on risky missions. United Nations personnel conduct their work in different parts of the world in a selfless demonstration of caring for those most in need. Often away from their loved ones, they sacrifice their time, daily comforts, health, and, on many occasions, even their lives, sparing little thought for the risks that they are exposed to in the pursuit of the goals of the Organization.

Against this background and in light of the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1502 (2003) of 26 August 2003 on the protection of humanitarian personnel and United Nations and its associated personnel, I take this opportunity to remind those States which have not already done so to ratify, or, where appropriate, accede to the 1994 Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel. This Convention was adopted by the Member States in order to provide a framework of internationally accepted rules for the protection of United Nations and associated personnel.

I would like to encourage Heads of State and Government and Foreign Ministers attending the 58th General Assembly to make use of the opportunity provided by the high level treaty event, Focus 2003 - Treaties Against Transnational Organized Crime and Terrorism, which will be held from 23 to 26 September 2003, to undertake treaty actions, as appropriate, also in relation to the 1994 Convention. Not only would this greatly contribute to further strengthening the framework of internationally agreed rules designed to protect United Nations and associated personnel, but would also assist in enhancing the international rule of law.

Furthermore, States seeking to further strengthen this legal framework and raise awareness of the important and often dangerous tasks that are undertaken in different places by many United Nations personnel would be encouraged.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Annan', with a stylized, cursive script.

Kofi A. Annan