

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
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**TOAST AT DINNER HOSTED BY CHAIRS OF PARLIAMENTARY FOREIGN
RELATIONS COMMITTEES**
Rome, 18 April 2007

President Dini, President Ranieri,

Thank you for your kind words and warm welcome. You have already honoured me once by inviting me to address a joint session of the foreign relations committees. That meeting, held earlier today, was a wonderful opportunity for me to outline some of my priorities, and to hear the views of your colleagues.

Now, you honour me yet again!

I know that the warmth of your reception reflects your feelings for the United Nations. Indeed, the most gratifying part of my visit is the strong expressions of support for the UN and its work that I have received from all of you.

I must admit I arrived here expecting nothing less. Italy, after all, is one of the UN's most active Member States. It plays host to the UN system three times over. Whether here in Rome, in Brindisi or in Turin, you have long welcomed UN agencies and staff with open arms, and made all my colleagues – and today, me – feel truly at home.

Beyond your generous hospitality, you are the only UN Member State to rank in the top eight in both troop and financial contributions to the Organization. From Somalia to Mozambique, East Timor to Kosovo, Italy has been a part of some of the UN's toughest and most vital missions.

On my recent visit to Lebanon, I saw at first hand the tremendous work being performed by Italian peacekeepers in that country's South. After last year's terrible war, Italy led us back to stability by agreeing to anchor an expanded and more robust UNFIL presence. Today, that force operates under the very capable command of an Italian officer, Major-General Graziano.

Excellencies,

Whether in Southern Lebanon or in the meeting rooms of the New York Secretariat, my predecessors and I have all come to depend on Italy's commitment to the United Nations, and to the ideals of multilateralism.

That is why I believe it is more proper for me to honour you. Please join me, then, in raising a toast to the people and Government of Italy; may you never waver in your search for multilateral solutions to the most challenging of problems.

Thank you very much.