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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

**REMARKS ON THE OCCASION OF THE INVESTITURE OF THE NEWLY
ELECTED CAPTAINS REGENT
San Marino, 1 April 2013**

His/Her Excellency, Captain Regent [TBC],
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His Excellency, Foreign Minister Pasquale Valentini, Minister of Foreign Affairs of San
Marino,
Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am deeply honoured to attend this ceremony. This event perfectly captures San Marino's long-established and cherished traditions.

Today we celebrate more than the investiture of two leaders. Here, in the oldest republic in the world, we prove the enduring power of democracy.

My job takes me to many countries that are mired in conflict. San Marino offers a different experience. Your history is free of war. There has been no fighting with your neighbours; no coups within.

San Marino went further than protecting its own people from the ravages of conflict. During many wars over the centuries, you sheltered refugees who fled fighting.

The dual executive branch structure dates back to Roman times. Standing before you, I feel the impressive legacy of many centuries of tradition. I see democracy's influence on peace and stability.

San Marino offers three universal lessons about democracy.

First, no one system is right for all countries.

During my brief visit, I had an unprecedented experience. This was the first time – in my many travels as Secretary-General – that I met with four democratically elected heads of the same State in the space of 24 hours.

San Marino's system of two heads of State is distinctive – but it has not been duplicated. Other countries can learn from your model. The lesson is not that they should have two heads of State who rotate every six months. The lesson is that each country should adopt whatever model of democracy works for them – as long as it truly empowers all citizens.

We may draw another conclusion from this historic setting, which is recognized by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. San Marino has an iconic status as a free city-state. It symbolizes the development of democratic models in Europe and around the world.

If we were to travel back in time 600 years, we would find most of these buildings hosting the same functions they do today.

But since the 19th century, new buildings have been added. Others have been renovated. There was intensive restoration and reconstruction through the beginning of the 20th century.

This is my second lesson: like these buildings, democracy can always be improved. Every society must constantly strive to strengthen its democratic systems and institutions.

Another feature of San Marino's democracy is that citizens here can petition the Captains Regent on topics of public interest. This is a third central lesson: democracy allows individuals to engage with authorities to reach collective goals.

For centuries, San Marino has shown that guaranteeing rights and opportunity under the rule of law generates a virtuous cycle. You have a vibrant civil society. Your private sector is enterprising. And it is backed by accountable institutions.

Excellencies,

Democracy is as important among nations as within them.

The United Nations General Assembly is the world's parliament. Each country has one vote. This reflects our faith in giving an equal say to all regardless of size, wealth or geo-strategic influence.

Recently, a student asked me about a powerful country and its future role at the United Nations. I drew a parallel with nature. God has created all different creatures with different abilities. A mighty lion has great strength. But a little bird can fly.

Like nature's ecosystem, our international system at the United Nations needs all countries. San Marino is an important member in its own right; and strong proof of our enduring faith in democracy.

I am grateful for San Marino's many contributions.

This country is a defender of the rights of children and persons with disabilities. I especially appreciate the San Marino-UNICEF Awards for recognizing outstanding leaders who uphold children's rights.

San Marino promotes intercultural dialogue and supports international law. It ratified the landmark Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court less than a year after it was opened for signature.

San Marino's commitment to the environment can be seen in its efforts to preserve the country's natural beauty – and in the energy it brings to our global work to promote sustainable development.

San Marino has sponsored many draft resolutions at the United Nations. It has also worked to address the needs of other countries with small populations. I am especially grateful to San Marino for providing more than a million euros for a five-year project with the United Nations World Health Organization to reduce health inequities in small States.

This shows that San Marino is eager to share its experiences, learn from others and act as a global citizen.

The world needs more countries like San Marino – where there is hope, transparency and civic engagement beyond its borders.

I count on San Marino to do even more, for example by supporting the United Nations Democracy Fund. In this way, you can contribute to civil society projects that share this country's spirit of direct democracy. You can help give voice to those who need it most.

As a member of the Global Governance Group, San Marino speaks on behalf of small countries. Next month, the General Assembly will hold a thematic debate on the United Nations and global economic governance. I encourage you to continue taking initiative on this front. I pledge my full support to helping raise the profile of global economic governance – and to take account of the views of small States.

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

My trip here comes at a pivotal moment in the global history of democracy.

Around the world, people are struggling for a say in their future. They want jobs, justice, an end to corruption – and a fair share of political power.

This story is just beginning. Democracies are not born overnight. They cannot be built in a year. One or two elections do not make democracies. They require sustained, painstaking work.

In several parts of the world, we have seen alarming threats to hard-won gains in democratic governance. I am deeply disturbed by the growing pressures and restrictions on civil society groups in some countries. Authorities have introduced troubling legislation making it almost impossible for civil society organizations to operate. Champions of democracy are up against new confrontational measures.

We must fight against this backsliding. The United Nations deplores all measures to suppress civil society organizations. They are vital to the well being of any nation and they deserve protection and support.

I have repeatedly called on leaders to listen to their people. The past two years have taught us that you cannot ignore the voice of the people. Demands for justice cannot be silenced.

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Those who enter San Marino are greeted by a sign that says, "Welcome to the Ancient Land of Liberty."

I am confident that from this ancient land of liberty, you will continue to promote and defend freedom, progress and democracy around the world.

Insieme, le Nazioni Unite e San Marino lavoreranno per un futuro migliore. ["In-sec-cm-ay lay Nat-zee-on-a-ee U-nee-tay la-vor-ay-RANO pear un fu-TUR-o mee-lee-OR-ay." "Together, the United Nations and San Marino will work for a better future."]

Grazie ["Thank you."]

Thank you.

UNITED NATIONS



NAZIONI UNITE

IL SEGRETARIO GENERALE

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**ORAZIONE UFFICIALE IN OCCASIONE DELL'INSEDIAMENTO
DEI NUOVI CAPITANI REGGENTI**

San Marino, 1° aprile 2013