



Remarks

by

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Vice-President

on behalf of

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Excellencies,
Secretary-General,
Ms. Leymah Gbowee,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning.

I am pleased to welcome you to the opening of this High Level Forum on The Culture of Peace, on the occasion of the fifteenth (15th) anniversary of the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace.

Let me begin by thanking the Permanent Mission of Bangladesh for its considerable efforts in keeping the culture of peace on the forefront of our agenda, for advancing this issue within the United Nations and for helping unite Member States around its full and effective implementation. I would also like to acknowledge the dynamic engagement of civil society and extend my gratitude to the Global Movement for the Culture of Peace (GMCoP) who has worked in close cooperation with my office to coordinate this event.

Excellencies,

In September 1999, our Nations General Assembly adopted, by consensus, a resolution on the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace. During the past fifteen (15) years, our Assembly has unanimously adopted a follow-up resolution each year. This consensus reminds us that the desire for a culture of peace knows no boundaries and is inherent in the hearts of all people. It transcends gender, culture, religion, faith and belief, and unites the rich and poor, the old and young, East and West, North and South around a common desire.

It is fitting that in my final week as President of the General Assembly, one of the last events I will preside over relates to the culture of peace. Throughout the session, I have been part of numerous meetings, debates, conferences and dialogues, and underpinning each one has been a

drive for greater, more sustainable peace. Whether the topic at hand was disarmament, climate change, sustainability, inequality, health, education or many others – at some level, the goal was greater peace – greater peace for countries, communities, families and individuals.

This past year has afforded me the opportunity to invoke the wise words of some of the world's great advocates for peace, such as Mahatma Ghandi, Nelson Mandela and Maya Angelou. I have been inspired by peacemakers who survived the Holocaust and the Rwandan genocide. And I have had the privilege of listening to and standing with countless men and women, young and old, known and unknown, who walk the same path and are committed to the same goal: to bring more peace to this earth.

Today, I have the honor to be part of this event with a number of committed peacemakers: our Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon; the Nobel Laureate, Ms. Leymah Gbowee, who is with us today, and whose courage and determination helped usher in a new period of peace and hope for her country; and many distinguished panelists and speakers.

Distinguished Guests,

As our world and its people struggle with many challenges and obstacles, and news headlines remind us that violence, intolerance, injustice, indifference and cruelty still take hold of many people and places in the world, I thank the peacemakers I have met this past year for spreading their hope and optimism, and continuing their work, sometimes in the face of tremendous odds.

Indeed, the very essence of our United Nations is to promote and work toward creating a culture of peace. The quest for peace is reflected throughout our UN Charter and embodied in these words of the preamble, which call on all of us to [quote] “practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours” [end quote]. The desire for peace drives this organization and the work we do in nearly every programme, office and department.

In this respect, I welcome the initiative of UNITAR, in collaboration with Nonviolent Peaceforce, to develop an online course called Strengthening Civilian Capacities to Protect

Civilians from Violence. The course supports efforts for sustaining a global culture of peace by engaging civil society and other relevant stakeholders in bringing about peaceful settlement of violent conflicts and is designed to foster intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we celebrate this 15th anniversary of the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, allow me to list just a few of the conditions for peace that our forbearers included in the GA Resolution 53/253 of September 1999:

- a) Eradicating poverty and illiteracy and reducing inequalities within and among nations;
- b) Promoting sustainable economic and social development;
- c) Eliminating all forms of discrimination against women through their empowerment and equal representation at all levels of decision-making;
- d) Ensuring respect for and promotion and protection of the rights of children; and
- e) Increasing transparency and accountability in governance;

This list is not comprehensive but reminds us that peace is more than just the absence of war and fighting. It is an active quest for well-being and lives of dignity. Not surprisingly, many of these ideals are likewise reflected in the Open Working Group's proposed goals for the post-2015 development agenda.

This list is yet another confirmation that the new agenda must be rooted in a culture of peace. Peace as an overarching theme must be woven throughout the goals and underpin the targets. And our new agenda must be backed by the political will, commitment, partnerships and financial support to help usher in a new era of peace on a global level. And we will get there

through the toil and commitment of dedicated peacemakers, much the same way Ms. Gbowee and her colleagues brought forth a new era of light in Liberia.

Excellencies,

Next week, I will pass the torch to my successor, H.E. Mr. Sam Kutesa, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Uganda and President-elect of the 69th session of the UN General Assembly, to carry this work forward and guide the next steps. But before I do, I will convene a high-level stocktaking event this week's Thursday and Friday to assess the outcomes of the various post-2015 processes that have taken place during the 68th session, and to provide an opportunity to Member States and other stakeholders to identify possible inputs into our Secretary-General's Synthesis Report that will form the basis of the negotiations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. Tomorrow, I will meet with Civil Society one last time to hear their thoughts and suggestions. Just as Civil Society is critical in helping implement a culture of peace, it will surely be necessary in implementing a post-2015 development agenda.

In fact, the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace reminds us that the massive responsibility of shifting our world toward a culture of peace belongs to all of us: parents, teachers, politicians, journalists, religious bodies and groups, intellectuals, those engaged in scientific, philosophical and creative and artistic activities, health and humanitarian workers, social workers, managers at various levels as well as non-governmental organizations.

Essentially all of us have a role. Just as we are united in our desire for greater peace, so we are united in our ability to live and act as peacemakers. Each of us has a message of peace to share and I invite you to use this opportunity to share it today.

I wish you meaningful and productive discussions.

Thank you.
