

Secretary-General's Remarks to the Student Observance of the International Day of Peace

Dear young friends from around the world, Distinguished Messengers of Peace,
President of the General Assembly,

I go to many meetings, especially at this time of year, but believe me when I say this is one of my favourites, meeting young people – the leaders of our future generations. By meeting in this way, you are sharing ideas across the planet. You are asking questions that are focused on results. “What can I do to make this world a better place?” “How can I help?” “When do we start?”

These are the kind of questions I would like to hear more of in the UN.

You may not be in positions of power – yet – but you have a very powerful weapon: your voice. By speaking out, by raising awareness, by mobilizing around the issues that you feel passionate about you can make a major difference in our world.

The fact that you are here shows you are already aware and active. I bet that by the end of today's meeting, you will be even more inspired by the energy of your fellow students.

We need to build on this momentum. Your generation has powers of social networking that my generation can hardly comprehend.

I use electronic communications all the time, but honestly – this is a little embarrassing – I have zero friends online. But you – collectively – can reach tens of thousands of people in an instant. You can mobilize way beyond your clique, beyond your community, even beyond the borders of your own country. That is the power you have and I count on it – your power to make this world different when you become leaders, and even before.

The ideas you generate at this conference deserve to be heard by the policy-makers, diplomats and officials who normally meet in this room. I am sorry I cannot attend your whole conference. But my aides will provide a full report afterwards.

This is a very important day, a day of peace. We just observed this very important and meaningful day, day of peace. I hope not only today but everyday throughout the world around the world will be a day of peace and harmony. So please use this chance to speak out about what concerns you most and think about your future and the future of this world.

Thank you.

New York, 19 September 2008