2 October 2019

Excellency,

It is my pleasure to enclose herewith, an informal summary of the High-level working luncheon on the Culture of Peace. The luncheon was held on Friday, 13 September 2019, on the margins of the High-level Forum on the Culture of Peace.

The luncheon provided a platform to deepen discussions on accelerating the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals through the promotion of a culture of peace.

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

Tijjani Muhammad-Bande

All Permanent Representatives and
  Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York

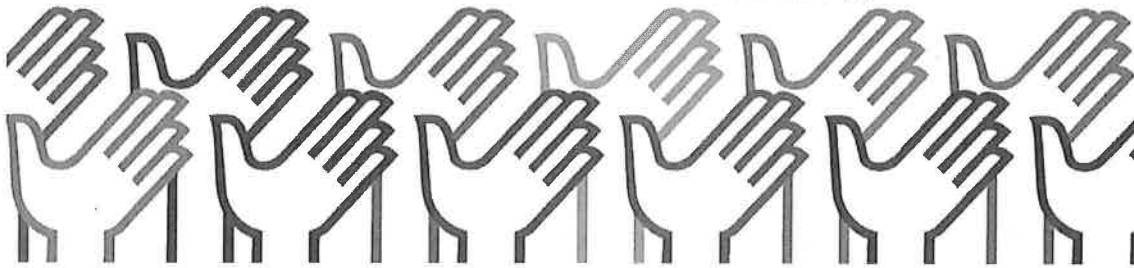### High-Level Working Luncheon on the Culture of Peace
Friday 13 September 2019
UNHQ, New York
Informal Summary

Background

On Friday 13 September 2019, the President of the General Assembly (PGA), H.E. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, hosted a High-Level working luncheon on the Culture of Peace on the margins of the annual General Assembly High-Level Forum on the Culture of Peace. This year's event marked the 20th observance of the forum in commemoration of the adoption of the "Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace." The PGA organized the luncheon as a forum to explore the synergies between peace and development and produce concrete proposals for accelerating the Goals whilst fostering a culture of peace.

Format

The Luncheon consisted of an opening segment, keynote address and nine (9) roundtable thematic dialogues. The event attracted the active participation of more than 180 participants including Permanent Representatives of Member States, religious leaders, media experts, gender advocates, youth advocates, mayors, civil society organizations and UN Agencies. This multi-sector dialogue was consistent with the PGA's commitment to strengthening multilateralism through a comprehensive and inclusive approach. It was a practical demonstration of the PGA's efforts to make the UN relevant by bringing the UN closer to the people and the people closer to the UN. The luncheon was organized with the collaboration and support of UNESCO and UN Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC).

Opening Statement

President Espinosa Garcés in her opening remarks noted that in the face of worsening conflicts and violence around the world, it is tempting to move into "firefighting" mode. What is needed she said, is urgent action to sow the seeds for sustainable peace: by investing in conflict prevention, peace education and inter-cultural, inter-faith dialogue. She reiterated the need for accelerated action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals – which provide the basis for a culture of peace.

The PGA described the recently launched 'UN Plan of Action to Safeguard Religious Sites' as an important tool in the efforts to counter hate and violence around the globe and said that *"Religious sites should be havens for reflection and peace, not sites of bloodshed and terror."*

In concluding her remarks the PGA raised a toast to the culture of peace in the words "if *wars begin in the minds of men, let peace begin in the hearts of men and women – and let the peace we sow be fruitful enough to deliver the SDGs by 2030!"*

Keynote Address

The special guest, His Royal Majesty, Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, King of the Ashanti Kingdom in his keynote address outlined the crucial role of culture and traditional leadership in pursuing the global agenda for peace and sustainable development. He shared insights on the Ghanaian experience where, under his auspices and moral authority as a traditional head, a seventeen-year raging conflict in the Northern parts of the country had been resolved to the satisfaction of all sides. He also stressed the importance of grassroot mobilization and partnership with traditional leaders towards localizing international arrangements and achieving especially, the 2030 global development agenda.

A summary of the main discussions and recommendations from each of the nine thematic roundtable discussions is outlined below:

The Stakeholder Deficit: Redefining Governance and Mobilizing All of Society to Achieve the SDGs and Sustain Peaceful Societies

- Linking the international community's integrated efforts to support the voices of the civil society and further empower women and youth would be crucial elements of the implementation of the global agenda.

- A strong focus on the effective implementation of SDG 5 is a prerequisite for any culture of peace endeavor. Furthermore, strengthening diversity in all settings of life, by including representatives of diverse groups such as indigenous people in decision-making processes and focusing on values and knowledge was evoked as a major contributor for the establishment of a culture of peace.
- There is a need for a long-term strategy that includes leveraging the potential of partnership in building peaceful, just and inclusive societies.

Conventional and Digital Media Platforms: The New Weapons of our Modern Age

- There is a rise of hateful content in conventional and digital media platforms and the media has become an enabler of political strategies and violent incidents that challenge global peace and security.
- Hate speech and incitement to violence should be criminalized while taking into account Universal Human Rights and International law.
- There is an increase need for a m internationally binding Code of Ethics for digital and conventional media.
- Adopting long term strategies such as media literacy at an early age to promote critical thinking at an early age is essential.
- Collaboration between governments and on-line providers, civil society and media experts to monitor and curb hate speech in the media is key.

Mobilizing the Capacity of Faith Actors for Building Just, Peaceful and Inclusive Societies through strengthening intercultural and Interfaith Dialogue

- religion is a critical factor of peace and religious leaders are critical actors for promoting peace. It is therefore important to promote and highlight the positive narrative of religion and its contribution to peacebuilding
- spaces for interreligious dialogue are shrinking. The existing spaces must be preserved, and new spaces must be created – dialogue among religions is importance for promoting understanding and peaceful societies.
- Early education for young people on the values of different religions and multiculturalism is key.
- Youth must be encouraged value and take seriously religion and interreligious dialogue and tolerance.

Gender-based Approach to Promoting a Culture of Peace

At the 20th Anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration and Program of Action on the Culture of Peace and on the eve of the 20th Anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, our gender equal and diverse table of representatives from different parts of the globe and society recommend:

- That the necessary political must be spent on ensuring that institutions, laws, policies and budgets sustains women's leadership through measures that promote parity and women's access to resources, rights and services.

Climate Change and a Culture of Peace

- Peace is the foundation stone of sustainable development and it is obvious that climate change is inherently related to peace.
- Climate change is a threat to the planet and therefore a threat to international peace and security.
- A lack of peace caused by climate changed induced disasters disrupts not just the natural balance, but also the social balance, causing mass migrations, including the millions of people who now have the unfortunate new tag of climate refugees.
- While climate change and ecocide need are discussed in the Security Council, we now need grassroots level action that localizes the SDGs and takes into account the perspectives of every member of society, and education plays a key role in this process.
- Peace and sustainability are two sides of the same coin. One cannot be achieved without the other and now, more than ever, we need to realize a culture of change and that will in turn, help us achieve a life of dignity for all.

Partnerships that Work for a culture of peace and the SDGs: The Private Sector

- The role of the private sector in contributing to peace is a complement to, but not a substitute for the important role of Government. The actions of businesses can help to overcome conflict and help to foster peace, however irresponsible private sector actions can contribute to causing and exacerbating violence and conflict.

- The nature of conflict differs greatly depending on the context: clear that we need more responsible leaders not only at the level of multinational businesses but also in the SME

businesses which play a great role in contributing to peace, particularly within the context of the intersection between local communities and local businesses;

- trust-building is a requisite for a more effective public-private collaboration.
- The private sector must be held accountable for its actions. There are many incentives for companies to make positive contributions to peace as business can't thrive in a society that fails. Governments should therefore hold MNCs accountable for their operations abroad. Multinationals that operate outside their countries of origin should held to the same standards when operating back home.

The Bottom-up Approach to Promoting a Culture of Peace: Civil Society Organizations, Youth and Municipalities

- Innovative civic education involving new partners is required for promoting and strengthening the efforts of young people.
- Trust needs to be restored between governments, international organizations and civil society.
- Investment in youth is important to support the actions and efforts of youth in promoting peaceful societies. UNAOC's Fellowship and Young Peacebuilders programmes was cited as an example of youth programmes focused on supporting the youth as peacebuilders.

Enhancing the use of evidence to promote a Culture of Peace

- It would be beneficial for the promotion of a Culture of Peace to clarify the definitions of the key factors that contribute to peace.
- The international community needs to shift measurements of peace efforts to the positive indicators and examples of peace rather than of conflict and increasing violence.
- Evidence could include qualitative measures like assessing and sharing positive stories and efforts of role models.
- Education, especially multicultural education, is an intricate part of a culture of peace, for tolerance of diversity and for instilling positive norms, attitudes and behaviours.
- Norms and values of human rights and justice in society must be strengthened to contribute meaningfully to a culture of peace.

Conscience

Participants discussed the concepts of love and conscience as requirements for promoting a culture of peace as introduced by Bahrain in General Assembly resolution 73/329.

- Conscience focuses on "people" as is the spirit of the SDGs.
- The basic building blocks of conscience and love are to establish peace within (oneself, in self-esteem), peace between people, then within families, communities and societies, then between countries, and then within the United Nations and the Security Council.
- Member States are encouraged to sign the Code of Conduct and focus more on "soft power" issues like women, peace and security, water security, and children in armed conflict, that are essential for the prevention of conflict and thus the realization of the "Culture of Peace with Love and Conscience."

Closing Segment

Ms. Nada Al Nashif, the Assistant Director -General for Social and Human Sciences in closing the segment commended participants for the fruitful and open discussions and identified common threads in the promotion of culture of peace globally, regionally, nationally and locally; the need to close the gap in bringing in evidence to support policy making; the advent of new technologies, the need to safeguard and balance the freedom of expression in the face of hate speech; the need to develop policies based on best practices; bottom up approach, civic engagement, enhanced 'listening"; intercultural and religious literacy, and most of all fostering respect for all remained common denominators for various thematic discussions that took place during the luncheon.

In her closing remarks, H.E. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés thanked the participants for the in-depth and substantive discussions held over the luncheon. She emphasized the importance of a comprehensive and inter-generational approach in addressing global issues. The PGA also used the opportunity of the luncheon which, was the last event under her presidency to thank all partners for their support during the seventy third session and for their contributions in making the UN relevant for all.