



Keynote Speech

by

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on

“Building a Culture of Peace”

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Dear friends, colleagues and students:

Let me begin by saying how happy and honoured I am to speak at the 36th Symposium on International Relations, taking place in the magnificent setting of the Yale University.

This year's focus is extremely close to my heart and I would like to especially commend the organizers, the League of Women Voters of Connecticut and the Yale University as well as other supporters, for having selected the theme of "Building a Culture of Peace" and having been able to gather such amazing panellists.

David Adams has been and continues to be one of the major, most inspirational leading forces behind the international movement to promote the call by the United Nations for a transition from a culture of war and violence to a culture of peace.

Sanam Naraghi Anderlini and her organization "Women Waging Peace", led by Ambassador Swanee Hunt, play a decisive role in networking, advocating and shaping public policy in support of the great number of incredible women who are deeply involved, at the grassroots level, in reconciliation efforts to bring stability and peace to the most violent areas of the world.

The Hague Appeal for Peace, led by Cora Weiss, a vanguard of global movement for peace, here represented by Betty Burkes, has a laudable mission, that of seeing peace education integrated into educational curricula as well as community and family education worldwide so as to make culture of peace truly become a part of life.

Last, but not least, Reverend Alice deV. Perry is at the forefront of the "Fellowship of Reconciliation", which has been working since 1915 seeking to replace violence, war, racism with non-violence, peace and justice, and carrying on programmes and educational projects concerned with domestic and international peace and justice, and non-violent alternatives to conflict.

Of course, in Pauline Cantwell, we have a wonderful moderator and a committed leader working for peace at global level. Her profile as the President of the Peace Caucus at the UN is known to us all.

I feel very privileged to be with all of you today.

With the panellists' wonderful backgrounds, their invaluable experience in promoting a culture of peace at the personal, community and global level, I believe we are going to have a truly rich exchange, an exchange that I have been looking forward to since I was first contacted by Beverly Stern in New York on behalf of the organizers. My warmest thanks go to all of you for the energy, effort and thoughtfulness you put in organizing this highly-regarded annual symposium.

I would now like to share with you my thoughts on culture of peace, at a time when the world is being seized by the need of addressing, ever more urgently, issues that cause violence and acts of terrorisms.

I would be very happy to then take any questions you might have.

As we have commenced our journey into the Twenty-First Century, we envisage many promises within the grasp of humankind.

Progress, in the fields of science and technology, trade and communications, has boosted global wealth to levels that seemed unreachable few decades ago. We can now see immense possibilities. We have the power to change the world for the better. We have the technology and the wealth. With collective efforts and will, we can eliminate hunger, eradicate disease, get rid of malnutrition and poverty and create a fulfilling future for all. We pay tribute to human creativity and genius for the progress achieved by mankind. For all the advances made – in science, literature, arts, management and medicine – the human mind has played the pivotal role.

However, we cannot but consider the paradox existing in the level of development reached by the modern world. On the one hand, through globalization, an irreversible trend toward a global village has been established, while on the other hand, divisions have increased.

Great differences still exist between regions -- disparities and inequalities have over the years only augmented causing the world to enter into a new era of insecurity.

We are living at a time when people fear deadly attacks by terrorists; when people suffer from genocide or massive violations of human rights carried out by, on many

occasions, their own governments. Despite the great advances in science and medicine, millions are dying from HIV/AIDS. Despite all the efforts, too many people live in extreme poverty, hunger, disease, or do not have access to something as basic as clean water and sanitation or education and health. Worst-hit victims everywhere are the women and the children.

Poverty and lack of opportunities deprive people of their dignity as human beings, leaving them hopeless and incapable of pursuing the kind of life they deserve. Marginalization and abuse because of ethnicity, gender or religion, social turbulence, repression, violence and terror are all closely linked to poverty and to the concurrent lack of basic human rights.

It is in this context that we come to face another side to the human mind. That other side is capable of breeding intolerance, harbouring hatred and inflicting pain on fellow human beings. It is this side of the human mind that poses the gravest challenge for humankind.

Time and again, we are powerless in the face of continuing conflicts. The last century has been the most violence-ridden in the history of mankind. There seem to be no end to the horrors we witnessed in Rwanda, Srebrenica and Cambodia. Similar patterns have been unfolding again in the Sudanese region of Darfur. Bordering the Sudan, another often forgotten war rages on against innocent civilians in northern Uganda.

The killing fields are still too many, the casualties and suffering seem endless. We have suffered in a culture of war and violence.

The challenge for us will be to prevent the human mind from becoming consumed by ignorance, fear, violence, fratricide and intolerance. We have seen in the past century, or even in the first years of the new century alone, what these can do to undermine the progress of the human race. We have seen war, intra-state conflicts, endemic violence and social strife. We have seen ignorance and fear erode our values. We have seen worst forms of intolerance in racism and xenophobia. We have seen widespread deprivation, conflict over scarce resources and suppression of human rights.

We have seen a culture of war and violence spread its venomous tentacles threatening to destroy all that is good, moral and just.

Culture of Peace in a World of Turmoil

The subject of this Symposium on International Relations – “Building Culture of Peace” – is not only timely, it is of great significance in today’s world of turmoil. In recent times, we have seen new conflicts breaking out in many parts of the world. For some of the old ones – where we thought we were looking at light at the end of the tunnel – things have gone the opposite direction. It is therefore important that we take a close look at our approaches toward bringing peace to strife-torn lands and bridging the gulf of hatred. We have to find out where we went wrong. And we have to find better ways to establish peace.

We need to remember that in the hate- and violence-filled Twentieth Century, we saw the power of non-violence in the sacrifices of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King. Forces for hatred and intolerance claimed their lives - but not their souls.

The dawning of the New Millennium gives us a scope to take lessons from our past in order to build a new and better tomorrow. One lesson learned is that to prevent history repeating itself, the values of non-violence, tolerance and democracy will have to be inculcated in every woman and man – children and adults alike.

I am sure that some of you have heard it many times, but I would like to quote from the UNESCO Constitution because of its continuing relevance and value: “*Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed.*” The flourishing of a culture of peace will generate the mindset that is a prerequisite for the transition from force to reason, from conflict and violence to dialogue and peace. Culture of peace will then provide the bedrock to support a stable, progressing and prospering world – a world that is finally at peace with itself.

Changing Nature of Conflicts

The first step towards examining the road to peace should start with an appreciation of the changing nature of conflicts. Gone are the days of war between States for conquest, extension of spheres of influence in the name of pure ideology. The Cold War is history. Today's wars are about settling border disputes, controlling resources, capturing power, retaining tribal or clan dominance or continuing instability in neighbouring States and regions to profit in muddy waters.

These days we call them "civil conflict" or "civil strife" but there is nothing civil in the way they are conducted. Genocide, rape, lynching, hacking off limbs of innocent civilians are common. Most disturbing is that often these atrocities are directed to people living in the same community or neighbourhood. Hatred and intolerance have blurred the vision of the perpetrators.

Today's world and its problems are becoming increasingly more interdependent and interconnected due to globalization and advance in communication, in science and technology. Interdependency of the world, if not addressed with sanity, can change into a social, economic, nuclear or environmental catastrophe. The magnitude of these problems requires all human beings to work together in finding new solutions.

The need for a culture of peace is evident as we reflect on how our civilization has succumbed, from time to time, to the human frailties of greed, ambition, xenophobic myopia, cruelty and selfishness. We have seen that heinous acts are often committed under the veil of public mandates when in fact they respond to the wishes -- be they economic, political, military, or even religious -- of the few that have the power. At other times, atrocities are committed out of a mistaken fear of the unknown.

The efforts at peace and reconciliation have to be based on an understanding of this new reality. Global efforts towards peace and reconciliation is to be pursued with a collective approach. The United Nations -- as the most universal body -- is best-suited to undertake that role. It must take the lead in fulfilling its Charter obligation of maintaining international peace and security worldwide. In the responsibility that the United Nations must shoulder, stronger focus on prevention and peace building is essential, even more so in these tough times for the organization. The United Nations needs to be more than a

fire brigade rushing in to put out the conflagrations or much more longer-term than a buffer zone.

Dialogue, trust and reconciliation must be the foundations of the Twenty-First Century global community.

Action at the United Nations

In 1999, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Declaration and Programme of Action on Culture of Peace. The adoption of this document has been our most significant achievement at the United Nations promoting culture of peace. The culture of peace is a set a values, attitudes and ways of life base on principle of freedom, justice, democracy, tolerance, dialogue, understanding and respect for diversity.

The Declaration highlights the ideals, norms and objectives of a global culture of peace. The Programme of Action accompanying the Declaration identifies major areas such as: education, sustainable development, human rights, equality between women and men, democratic participation, advancing understanding, tolerance and solidarity, and international peace and security. The objective of a culture of peace is the empowerment of people. It contributes effectively to the overcoming of authoritarian structures and also exploitation, through democratic participation. We regard the culture of peace as an effective expedient to minimize and prevent violence and conflict in the present day world.

It was an honour for me to chair the nine-month long negotiations that led to the adoption of the Declaration and Programme of Action. I will always treasure and cherish that. For me this has been a realization of my personal commitment to peace and my humble contribution to humanity.

I consider this document as on the most significant legacies of the United Nations that would endure generations.

The adoption of the document provides all of us a clear set of guidelines for action. It is a universal document in the real sense transcending borders, cultures, beliefs and societies. It identifies actors who have a role in advancing culture of peace. Along

with states and international organizations like the United Nations, at the same time, it includes parents, family, teachers, students, artistes, journalists and religious and community leaders

Here, I would like to make a special reference on the role of the family in promoting a culture of peace. As the oldest institution in human history, family is absolutely at the core of promotion of culture of peace. Younger members of the society, growing up in a family that teaches them the virtues of tolerance, harmony and understanding will grow up with the right values that inculcate culture of peace.

Movement for a Culture of Peace

To realize the objectives of a peaceful and secure world in future, we need to create a movement that creates a culture of peace and non-violence in the world and promotes dialogue among civilizations. A movement that ensures that amity would replace atrocity, harmony would overcome hatred and stability would remove suspicion.

As the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan has said “the dialogue among civilizations must be peaceful. It must occur not just between societies but within them. It must be a dialogue of mutual respect, based on a framework of shared values – values such as those found in the United Nations Charter, like equality, justice and dignity – within which different traditions can co-exist. Such a dialogue can serve as an inspiration to all humanity. It can help us learn from each other. It can help us rise above the intolerance and conflicts that have blighted our history and undermined human progress.”

The adoption of the Programme of Action on Culture of Peace by the United Nations was only the first step. Our success rests on the strength of our partnership for its implementation. For the success of our movement, we have to build, a Grand Alliance amongst all, particularly with the proactive role and participation of civil society.

Looking around I believe that the culture of peace and non-violence is receiving wider and wider global acceptance -- through the efforts of the UN at the global level -- through activities undertaken nationally and regionally -- through declaratory statements

by many multilateral organizations -- through symposiums and workshops held all over the world like this one -- and through widespread involvement of civil society. I am referring to the indispensable contribution of non-governmental and interfaith organizations – you being a part of that endeavour -- we are witnessing the movement gather momentum.

The United Nations had observed the year 2000 as the International Year of a Culture of Peace and the present decade is being celebrated as the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World.

It is important that we remind us constantly that the movement for culture of peace must be seen as complementary to the efforts toward economic development and social justice. Non-violence can truly flourish when the world is free of poverty, hunger, discrimination, exclusion, intolerance and hatred. When women and men can realize their highest potential and live a secure and fulfilling life. Until then, each and every one of us would have to contribute -- collectively and individually -- to build peace through non-violence. We have to succeed together or together we shall perish. The choice is obvious.

Peace Education

How can we contribute in enabling societies to rise above all the divisions and doubt and anger? How can we contribute towards societies that possess the inner strength to demonstrate their cohesiveness when time is really difficult? I would say that we need to start from the children and women in our societies. In my mind, they are the main constituencies for building a culture of peace worldwide.

One of the most significant ways to promote a culture of peace is, in fact, through peace education. I would like to stress here that peace education needs to be accepted in all parts of the world, in all societies and countries as an essential element in building a culture of peace. Peace studies in all educational institutions must be incorporated as part of their curricula. Peace studies must be an essential part of our educational process as

much as reading and writing are. In many parts of the world, this could very well be linked to the studies about the United Nations.

The international network supporting the objectives of the Global Campaign for Peace Education, carried out so effectively by the Hague Appeal for Peace, must receive the continuous support of the entire international community. Educators in schools and communities look up to the peace practitioners for help in addressing complex issues such as teaching the skills of reconciliation, understanding diverse cultures, accepting differences.

The Hague Appeal for Peace concluded in October 2004 a very successful conference in Tirana, Albania, that I had the pleasure of addressing, where a group of educators came together with representatives of ministries of education and issued a Tirana Call for Peace Education. I invite all of you to become familiar with it and spread its appeal.

Never has it been more important for the next generation to learn about the world and understand its diversity. The task of educating children and young persons to find non-aggressive means to relate with one another is of primary importance. At higher levels, curricula must include human rights, the rules governing international law, the United Nations Charter and the goals of our global organization, peace, disarmament and sustainable development. The participation of young people in this process is very essential. Their inputs in terms of their own ideas on how to cooperate with each other in order to eliminate violence in our societies must be fully taken into account.

Women's empowerment and their role in peace and security

During the last years, there has been an increasingly strong recognition by Governments, international organizations and civil society of the importance of gender equality and the empowerment of women in the continuing struggle for equality, poverty reduction, peace, security, democracy, human rights and development.

In nearly every country and region of the world, we can point to areas in which there has been progress on achieving gender equality and women's empowerment. Yet,

this progress has been uneven and the gains remain fragile. Virtually nowhere are women's rights given the priority they deserve. And, despite increased global awareness, in many countries the rights of women are still under threat. Intensified efforts from all of us are needed to promote women's rights at the country level and develop effective mechanisms – both national and global -- to fully implement and monitor them.

Equally challenging is the growing violence against women and girls in armed conflict. In today's conflicts, they are not only the victims of hardship, displacement and warfare, they are directly targeted with rape, forced pregnancies and assault as deliberate instruments of war.

Women are deeply affected by conflicts which they have had little or no role in creating. Women's interests have been neglected by the peace-making process, which has resulted in male-centred approaches to peace and security.

Security Council resolution 1325 of 2000 is a landmark decision which has taken into account, for the first time in 55 years, the unrecognized, under-utilized and under-valued contribution women can make to preventing war, building peace and bringing individuals and societies back in harmony.

The potential of Resolution 1325, its implications and its impact in real terms are enormous. Women and men all over the world have been energized by such resolution, and political support for its implementation by Member States, international organizations and most importantly civil society is growing every day.

Progress has been made in six broad areas: i) awareness of the importance of gender perspectives in peace support work; ii) development of gender action work plans in disarmament and humanitarian affairs; iii) training in gender sensitivity and deployment of gender advisers; iv) prevention and response to violence against women; v) work on codes of conduct, including sexual harassment; and vi) support to greater participation of women in post-conflict reconstruction, post-conflict elections and governance.

That women make a difference when in decision- and policy-making positions is no longer in dispute. When women participate in peace negotiations and in the crafting

of a peace agreement, they keep the future of their societies, their communities, in mind. They think of how their children and grandchildren will live in their country, how they will benefit from the peace agreement. They have the greater and longer-term interest of society in mind. Whereas, historically in post-conflict situations, men are interested in ensuring that, following the peace agreement, they will retain authority and power in the government or in the cabinet or in any other power structure.

The Mano River Women's Peace Network, for example, brings together women in West Africa from Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone and, in pursuing their vision of peace, rallied together to call for disarmament and played a crucial role in paving the way to solving the conflict by having the three heads of government sitting at the same table. This joint peace initiative by the women of the Mano River region was awarded the UN Prize for Human Rights for 2003 by the General Assembly in recognition of its outstanding achievement.

In this context, I cannot but commend the wonderful work being carried out by the "Women Waging Peace", led by the vision, knowledge and relentless commitment of Ambassador Swanee Hunt. She has created a network of women peacemakers from conflict areas around the world, ranging from the Sudan to Sri Lanka, Colombia to Bosnia, the Middle East to Sierra Leone. Since 1999, "Women Waging Peace" has been providing these amazing women with invaluable links to each other and with excellent connections with policy shapers.

A lasting peace cannot be achieved without the participation of women and the inclusion of gender perspectives in peace processes. Informal peace initiatives of grassroots women's groups and networks, organized across party and ethnic lines, have carried out reconciliation efforts and have been increasingly recognized by the Security Council. The latter has met with women's groups and representatives of NGOs in missions to the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kosovo and Sierra Leone.

Much, nevertheless, remains to be done. Women are still very often ignored or excluded from formal processes of negotiations and elections.

Gender perspectives must be fully integrated into the terms of reference of peace-keeping-related Security Council resolutions, reports and missions. Peace support

operations should include gender specialists and consultations with women's groups and networks must be ensured. Full involvement of women in negotiations of peace agreements at national and global levels must be provided for, including training for women on formal peace processes. Gender perspectives should also be an integral part of post-conflict reconstruction programmes. A no-tolerance approach must be used in cases of violation of the code of conduct in peace-keeping operations. And gender sensitivity training must be provided to the peace keepers before they arrive in the zones of conflict.

Sustainable peace is inseparable from gender equality. When women are marginalized, there is little chance for an open and participatory society.

Involvement of the Community in Peace and Reconciliation

For a true culture of peace to be established, we need the involvement of the community itself. Four factors are helpful if we are to see a successful intervention on the part of communities working for peace, justice and reconciliation in a post conflict setting:

1. Strong civil society action at the grassroots level
2. Regeneration of traditional values and norms that are eroded during conflicts:
Traditional institutions, like the family as well as indigenous conflict prevention mechanisms are useful tool in this regard.
3. Involvement of women: From Burundi to Somalia to Northern Ireland to the Middle East and Cambodia, women have shown great capacity as peacemakers. They assumed activist roles while holding together their families and communities. At the grassroots and community levels, women have organized to resist militarization, to create space for dialogue and moderation and to weave together the shattered fabric of society.
4. Spreading a culture of peace: This, in my opinion, is most critical to the society. If the society is to come out of the shadows of conflict and make a new beginning, its members must be inculcated in a culture of peace.

In **conclusion**, let me reiterate why do I put such emphasis on culture of peace. Three reasons. **First**, it targets individuals. There cannot be true peace unless the mind is at peace. **Second**, it brings together all actors -- people from all walks of life. **Third**, it sets its goals not on the principle of an eye for an eye but on tolerance, solidarity and dialogue to settle differences and heal wounds.

In the changed world we live in, it is time to discard the eye for an eye approach. We have experienced enough violence. We cannot afford more. The time to act is NOW.

Peace is a prerequisite for human development. And peace cannot be achieved unless the mind is at peace. We all must undertake efforts to inculcate peace in ourselves. We cannot expect to change the world if we do not start first and foremost with changing ourselves, at the individual level. Peace is meaningful only when we have peace within and peace without.

Let me end on a note of guarded optimism. I believe the time of culture of peace has come. It is no longer an idea, nor just a concept - it is growing into a global movement with the dedicated efforts of people like you. But that only means we have crossed the first hurdle. The rest of the journey will take us to our streets where millions are without shelter; to our schools where children are denied proper education; to our communities where poverty is endemic and harmony exists only in hope; to our societies where discrimination and exclusion is still the order of the day; but most importantly, to every human mind to rid them of the evils of intolerance and prejudice, ignorance and selfishness that compel them to repeat the cycle of violence. Only then, our movement would have achieved its objective. Only then, we shall have a culture of peace that will inspire a truly universal value system.
