United in Differences and Diversity

Dear sweet children,

With the 7.8 billion people in the world, humankind is like a kaleidoscope of different races, ethnicities, religions and cultures. People also differ from each other based on factors of identity like age, gender, birth, status, language, citizenship/immigrant status, health/sickness, able-bodiedness/disability, and political ideologies to mention a few. These identity factors are seen in every social group or system in society, from large to small. These characteristics criss cross each other to give every individual a social location or positionality in society, ultimately determining power and privilege on one hand, and oppression or subjugation on the other. It is our sacred duty to promote the human rights of all, respecting their individual dignity and access to social justice. There can be no peace without justice, and likewise, no justice without peace.

Living together in peace is all about accepting differences and having the ability to listen to, recognize, respect and appreciate others, as well as living in a peaceful and united way.

The UN General-Assembly, in its [resolution 72/130](), declared 16 May the International Day of Living Together in Peace, as a means of regularly mobilizing the efforts of the international community to promote peace, tolerance, inclusion, understanding and solidarity. The Day aims to uphold the

desire to live and act together, united in differences and diversity, in order to build a sustainable world of peace, solidarity and harmony.

The Day invites countries to further promote reconciliation to help to ensure peace and sustainable development, including by working with communities, faith leaders and other relevant actors, through reconciliatory measures and acts of service and by encouraging forgiveness and compassion among individuals.

Background

Following the devastation of the Second World War, the United Nations was established to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. One of its purposes is to achieve international cooperation in solving international problems, including by promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, language or religion.

In 1997, the General-Assembly proclaimed - by its [resolution 52/15](#) — the year 2000 as the "International Year for a Culture of Peace". In 1998, it proclaimed the period 2001-2010 as the "International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for Children of the World."

In 1999, The General-Assembly adopted, by [resolution 53/243](#), the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, which serves as the universal mandate for the international community, particularly the United Nations system, to promote a culture of peace and non-violence that benefits all of humanity, including future generations.

The declaration came about as a result of the long-held and cherished concept — contained within the Constitution of UNESCO — that "since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed." The Declaration embraces the principle that peace is not merely the absence of conflict, but also requires a positive, dynamic participatory process, in which dialogue is encouraged and conflicts are resolved in a spirit of mutual understanding and cooperation.

The Declaration also recognizes that to fulfill such an aspiration, there is a need to eliminate all forms of discrimination and intolerance, including those based on race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.

Therefore, as seen from my earlier statements, this special Day is also closely connected with the Day of Conscience, the International Day of Happiness, the International Day of Peace and all other days instituted by the United Nations to bring us together as one united family of humankind in our small micro societies, as well as, across the globe.