

# *Many to Many*

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*“Many to Many” under the aegis of Operation Peace Through Unity is a communicating link between “we, the peoples” of all nations, races, creeds and ideologies offering in the spirit of the preamble of the United Nations Charter an instrument for the furthering of better relationships based on deepening mutual understanding and the aspiration to promote unity and cooperation beyond all differences.*

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## *I. The Word - and words*

Through modern means of communication humanity has been brought together across all divides; we can see each other and hear each other's voices from throughout the world. Through human ingenuity all borders have been transcended; neither personal nor national boundaries, loud arguments nor finger pointing can prevent us from seeing the entire world steeped in pain and disarray. Every moment of each day cascades of information and news bytes about local state of affairs are encircling the planet, followed by showers of expert commentaries and reactions from governments as well as the general public. The increasing complexity of societal upheaval and malfunction as well as environmental degradation gives rise to much concern and uncertainty, as well as a sense of the urgency for change.

More in depth, detailed and continuously updated, information on the many pressing issues of today is also available to all. So are the accounts of the rises and falls of past civilisations which may cast some light on root-causes to the challenges of today that shall have to be met and overcome in preparation for moving forward. We are reminded that, like all physical forms, civilisations too follow the cycle of seasons; they grow, peak and then decline – leaving their seeds for future sowings.

The invaluable treasures of the vision, wisdom and experience from our past can also be easily accessed. The words of prophets and findings of scientists; the creations of visionary artists and builders, and even personal accounts of the tests and trials of daily life in the past, can guide and inspire in us a growing sense of purpose and direction.

The dictionary defines a “word” as a ‘single unit of language which has meaning and is used with others to form sentences’. It seems however that– spoken loudly and used excessively for effect and power of persuasion - words can lose much of their substance and meaning.

According to the Teachings, ‘the Word’ (or Song) was ‘with God’, and: ‘Things are that which the Word makes them in naming them’. By means of words the human being is enabled to translate ‘the Word that was with God’ into its own language and give form and shape to ‘things’ within its particular sphere of creativity, thus moulding a world and environment in accordance with personal interpretation, wishes and desires. Humanity, the apprentice, is now faced with a world in deep pain, disorder and distress, reflecting the trials and errors on the road to learning.

However the borderless electronic communication is reminding us of the essential oneness of Life within all continuous expressions. Much knowledge and some comprehension has been gained and we, the inventors and mechanics, shall need not only to repair but also learn to heal all that which has been scattered, wounded and wasted throughout our planetary environment. For this we need to listen to the Song within our own being; the sound of the Word which is with God that is breathing life into form - ceaselessly making all things new.

The section entitled ‘The Two Paths, recorded by H.P. Blavatsky in “The Voice of the Silence”, advises us that we shall need to ‘... learn to discern the real from the false, the ever-fleeting from the everlasting’. It speaks of the difference between the head-learning and heart-wisdom, urging that we allow the heart to be the Guide.

In Heart-light the true purpose of each little unit of livingness within every planetary kingdom will be recognised and enabled to develop – in time and space - the fullness of its being; the creator of sentences that contain the essence of the Word building the living bridge from here to there.

## ***II. UN High Level Forum on the Culture of Peace 1 September 2016***

*This article about the event was written by PTU Advisory Panel member, Steve Nation, and originally posted on the 'World Goodwill at the UN Blog':*

[https://www.lucistrust.org/blog\\_wgun/forum\\_on\\_the\\_culture\\_of\\_peace\\_2016](https://www.lucistrust.org/blog_wgun/forum_on_the_culture_of_peace_2016)



The Trusteeship Council Chamber was a gift from Denmark to the UN. This wooden statue of a woman with her arms outstretched in the Chamber, by Danish artist Henrik Starcke, suggests "unlimited flight upwards to greater heights."

Multiple conferences take place at UN Headquarters in New York every day. It is truly a house of dialogue. This is not surprising when we consider that the Charter calls on the nations of the world to harmonize their actions for the common good. World Goodwill recently attended one of these conferences: the High Level Forum on the Culture of Peace. It took place under the gaze of an angelic statue in one of the most visually stunning conference rooms in the HQ complex – the Trusteeship Council Chamber.

The High Level Forum, an annual event since 2012, seeks to strengthen the global movement of citizens groups, international agencies and governments actively working to build the culture of peace, or what is known in the ageless wisdom as right human relations.

The UN focus on this theme has grown out of a landmark resolution of the General Assembly in 1999, the Declaration and Programme of Action on the Culture of Peace. A broad definition is given to the culture of peace as a set of values, attitudes, traditions and modes of behaviour and ways of life based on universal principles of freedom, justice and peace.

Attended by people of goodwill, government representatives and senior UN officials this year's Forum highlighted the synergy between efforts to build the culture of peace and the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 16 with its focus on the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development.

The program was notable for several inspiring and visionary presentations and for the fact that over 40 governments chose to attend and present statements in support of the theme. None of the previous forums have attracted so many governments, confirming the fact that current events and the rise of violent extremism have raised the profile of the Culture of Peace agenda at the UN.

In his opening address the President of the General Assembly pointed out that improving the UN's capacity to conduct peacekeeping operations and to sustain peace is critical to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Keynote speaker Ms Ouided Bouchamaoui, a 2015 Nobel Peace Prize laureate and a co-founder of the Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet, spoke of Tunisia's experience in fostering democracy and peace following the Jasmine Revolution. The relative success of the country's transition is, she said, the result of a focus on dialogue and compromise and on the significant role

of women. Noting that the world suffers from a lack of vision she emphasized the importance of inspiring hope for a better future amongst young people.

Two presentations that were particularly impressive were in a panel on the synergy between the SDGs and the Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace. David Nabarro is the UN Secretary General's Special Advisor on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. An edited transcript of his brief inspirational address is available as a separate post on this blog. He spoke of his excitement about the SDG's as a plan for the future that embraces all the issues that matter to the world's people. As he said there is no other plan. It's a great plan because it's universal. It offers a vision of the future for every single community of the world. It provides a role for everybody, but more than this, it reflects a basis of a movement for what it means to be a human being.

The 2030 Agenda makes clear that we cannot as a human race produce sustained development for subsequent generations unless we develop the capacity to resolve differences peacefully, without the harmful use of power. Being human requires that we value non-violent behaviour and reward it in childhood, in adolescence, in adulthood - in all settings and among all people. Unless this beautiful Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace is implemented the SDG's will not be achieved and we will not have a fit world for the generations to come.

Barbara Marx Hubbard will be well known to many readers of this blog. She is the author of numerous books on social and cultural evolution and head of the Foundation for Conscious Evolution. She spoke about the Global Movement for a Culture of Peace together with the UN's Declaration and Programme of Action as an embodiment of a vision of a new world, something the human species has never had before. The SDG goals were described as key areas of action in getting to that vision. The vision is an emergent property of consciousness and we are in process of discovering how to do it.

Participants and governments were reminded that nature can show us the way to act on the vision and achieve the goals. Referring to the Nobel prize-winner Ilya Prigogine's theory of Dissipative Structures, Hubbard noted that natural systems evolve to a higher order following periods of exaggerated disorder and crisis. In such a state innovations occur throughout the system and there comes a time, as disorder increases, when the innovations converge towards connectivity and the system cooperates in its own self-transcendence by connecting that which is working.

Drawing on this image she made three proposals for UN action. First identify the innovations that are already working, at no matter how small a scale, in solving the crises which the SDGs seek to address. Second enhance the synergy between the SDGs and the Culture of Peace by convening people in gatherings that use a whole systems approach to explore what is already working and breaking through and make the information widely available. This will give people of goodwill reason for hope and inspire further action. Third establish Offices for the Future at the UN and at every level of society tasked with identifying what is working in achieving cultures of peace and communicating that news.

The Forum concluded with further statements from governments and a final panel on the role of youth in advancing the Culture of Peace, including a passionate and visionary appeal to governments to greater engagement with young people from the UN Secretary General's Envoy on Youth, Ahmad Alhendawi.

*The fifth United Nations High Level Forum on the Culture of Peace, held in cooperation with Global Movement for The Culture of Peace <https://www.facebook.com/groups/gmcop/> 1 September 2016 at UN Headquarters in New York, was attended by Peace Through Unity (PTU) Representatives to the UN: Anne Creter, Sharon Deep and Iris Spellings.*

***“So you can't separate humanitarian action from development anymore; you can't separate development from peace anymore; you can't exclude women from***

*development anymore; you can't cut out disabled people; and you absolutely have to factor in climate change and the environment. It's also a renewed social contract between leaders and their people to which leaders have agreed to be accountable. And it provides a role for everybody; indeed it reflects a basis of a movement for what it means to be a human being.”* ( quote from David Nabarro's address to the UN High-Level Forum on the Culture of Peace)

### ***III. International Day of Peace, 21 September 2016***

#### ***The Sustainable Development Goals – Building Blocks for Peace***

##### **Whanganui/Wanganui, New Zealand**

Peace Through Unity and the Whanganui/Wanganui Branch of UNA NZ held its annual celebration beginning with a vigil at noon at the Handspan Peace Sculpture in Queen's Park. There was a small group present who braved the rain and held a minute's silence followed by several invocations to peace. Our Kaumatua, John Maihi, was unable to attend but Gavin Brooks came in his place. In the evening a panel discussion was held at the Quaker Settlement, followed by light refreshments including pulse-based dishes to recognise the UN International Year of Pulses. Concurrent with our usual celebrations, a photography exhibition recording human rights challenges in our neighbouring islands, "Voices of the Pacific" was showing in a local gallery. The photographer, Dr Pedram Pirnia, is a special officer for UNA NZ based in Auckland. Our local colleague, Robert Hoyle, curated the exhibition and has been on hand to discuss the material with visitors.

The evening event followed our regular pattern. The opening blessing was given by Rev Amail Habib, the local hospital chaplain. This was followed by bringing to our meeting all 193 member states of the United Nations, by asking, "Let peace prevail in...." each country by name.

The format of the evening was a presentation by our guest speaker, Dr Negar Partow, lecturer at Massey University, Defence Studies Department. Then a panel of local youth presented their ideas for action locally.

*"Sustainable Development Goals must be owned by everyone"* was Dr Partow's theme.

**Dr Partow**, spoke from a global perspective. She pointed out that the UN cannot be expected to solve all the world's problems. It did make a difference in many areas but perhaps some greater emphasis on prevention would bring more recognition of success. She split the UN's history into different periods - from 1945 to 1970s, 1970s to 2000s, and 2015 +, to show that it was making, albeit slow, changes. The General Assembly and the Security Council bring together representatives of sovereign governments, but the resolutions agreed upon will not necessarily be implemented for the good of their own citizens.

She gave as an example the difference between democratic governments and those which were more autocratic to indicate the level of civil society involvement in matters discussed at the UN. One example was development monies given to national governments. Large and noticeable projects will be undertaken to 'prove' that the money is being used wisely – but it does not trickle down to the citizens, especially the rural population, where it is most needed. Add to this the changes in climate being experienced world-wide leading to droughts and crop failures, or floods and typhoons washing away crops and homes and the conditions are set for potential conflict.

When self-sufficient rural people cannot feed themselves and their families, they will migrate to urban areas putting great strains on existing infrastructure and necessary services of clean water, sewage and accommodation. All of this adds to stress and a

sense of hopelessness. When ordinary people feel they have nothing left to lose, then force and conflict become an option. And when signs of increasing inequality are all around, it can lead to unrest and wars. Examples were given from current unrest in Middle Eastern countries.

The preamble to the UN Charter actually begins with the words, “We the peoples.....” There is a strong realisation that continuing UN reform is needed, such as the existence of the veto by the permanent five in the Security Council. Civil society, including business interests, must be actively involved before true progress can be made. Dr Partow’s greatest optimism is in the Sustainable Development Goals. These were drawn up after the most extensive civil society consultation to date.

*“The development of SDGs highlights a process of reform in the UN which itself stems from grassroots support(s). ...the future of security and peace is imbedded in a holistic approach that include the protection of environment and individuals as (an) integrated part of international decisions on security and peace.”*

The interest shown in and the success of the World Humanitarian Summit held in Istanbul, Turkey, earlier this year is proof positive of the widespread engagement with the SDGs.

*“While still being in the stage of development, SDGs provides a platform for further reforming of the United Nations and its goals for international peace and security.”*

Dr Partow commented that optimism was an absolute essential quality for any teacher or educator. She suggested that if a teacher did not have a positive attitude they should stop teaching!

The panel was composed of six local youth, one currently seeking a position on the local council, two from Whanganui High School and three – speaking as one – from Whanganui Girls’ College. This part of the evening was facilitated by Lei Graham, a local educator and Rotary Past President.

*“The implementation of the SDGs in our own community,”* was the challenge given to the panel.

**Josh Chandulal Mackay**, born and bred in Whanganui/Wanganui, has returned after gaining his university degree in Politics and Psychology. He served as a Youth Councillor and is now seeking election to the Whanganui District Council in the local body contest next month. He is currently managing compliance at Craigs Investment Partners. He was concerned about the affordability of rates (property taxes) for poorer people in the community. There is a rebate scheme for those on lower incomes but when only a flat rate rebate is available, the stress is not relieved for many. He recognises that some people need extra support. He is also interested in urban planning and design and has a vision of Whanganui/Wanganui becoming the Events Hub for the lower North Island providing activities for everyone.

**Alister Hughes**, is a student at Whanganui High School (and a previous UNA NZ regional speech award winner, and delegate at several Model United Nations General Assembly – MUN-GA, simulations.)

His presentation was,

*“... (to) consider how programs to build community engagement could reduce the rate of crimes locally, as well as underpinning the work towards many other Sustainable Development Goals.*

*... (is) often caused by a lack of empathy, and insight within the community. People don't understand the impacts of their actions, and simply don't care about their community; there is an utter lack of engagement.”*

He described a community hub created at a local school, Tawhero School, which provides,

*“...breakfast programs - to build interpersonal connections - other, adult educational programs - in order to develop necessary skills surrounding potential employment - and other access to some basic services; such as telephone access, internet, family counselling, dietary advice.”*

His proposal for action locally is to replicate this community programme elsewhere in our area.

**Jackie Hazlehurst**, a student at Whanganui High School, and another UNA NZ Regional Speech Award winner and participant in several MUN-GAs, lists her passions as debating, conservation and environmental issues. She attended the National Youth Enviro Leaders Forum (YELF) and the National Environmental Defense Society conference. In her spare time she is a volunteer at the local Whanganui Regional Museum. A sense of optimism is the greatest challenge facing people today. It is very easy to be cynical without realising that we are living in the most peaceful times – historically, as shown by Professor Steven Pinker. We only hear about what has happened, not what didn't happen! Jackie based her presentation on environmental matters especially climate change and SDG 'Life on Land'. Jackie pointed out that,

*“So we have climate change occurring on a massive scale. On the other hand, we have seen a massive loss of habitat and biodiversity. NZ has the highest biodiversity decline in the world. Extinction rates are increasing; we see ecosystems severely damaged. This is very topical as Predator Free 2050 has recently been announced.”*

But how can these negative changes be brought to the forefront of people's minds? It is easier to believe that the effects will not be evident for a while yet, so no immediate action is needed. And, anyway, what can one person do? She posed the question,

*“How can we implement an SDG that is broad and vague in our own community? (By) Understanding the spirit of the SDG (and applying a) Multi-pronged approach. Education.”*

There are many conservation projects around Whanganui/Wanganui, including several schemes at primary schools. Jackie felt that the current initiatives, such as Bushy Park (a 100-hectare predator-free native bird sanctuary), needed greater utilisation and interaction and this gap can be filled by young people. The Wanganui Youth Committee could be the link.

*“Whether or not you agree with how realistic those goals (SDGs) are, at least they are inspiring people to be optimistic.”*

A trio from Whanganui Girls' College, Solana Jones, Fynn Rees and Grace Souness took the opportunity to describe a project with which they are involved. These young women are creating vegetable gardens and an orchard. They see many benefits from preparation, planting, growing through to harvesting which can be passed on to younger students so creating an improved generational awareness of healthy eating. The same applies to the planting and care of fruit trees. All of their efforts have a long-term focus and generate interest for younger students to follow in their footsteps. They recognise that this project covers several SDGs and their interrelationships.

**Hamish McDouall**, our current Deputy Mayor took time out from his election campaigning to give a summary of the presentations. He thanked each speaker and gave a short reflection on the views they shared. He then searched through our flags to find one representing a Caribbean island he had visited. To paraphrase his very apt example of our evening's purpose:

A sandy beach, palm trees, blue sea, sun and a cold drink. This would be many people's idea of a dream vacation. Overhead, jumbo jets were coming in to land at the local airport bringing more tourists. However, how often is any thought given to those who live there all the time. The locals. How do they live?

All too often, the tourists are living in a kind of 'bubble' – oblivious to life outside. Maybe even congratulating themselves on how they are contributing to the local economy – providing an income for/to the 'locals'.

The real picture sadly is all too often totally different. All the glitz and glamour is confined to the 'resorts' while outside, in the countryside, the picture is one of poverty and back-breaking hard work to eke out a living. Tourism income is syphoned off to a small elite with the promise of it 'trickling down' to the citizens.

Does your idea of 'heaven' contribute to planetary disasters and human suffering??

Wars and conflicts historically, from the French Revolution to Syria today, have been caused by social and economic poverty and inequality. While 17 separate SDGs have been identified, they are all inter-related and their success will depend on each and every one of us, no matter where we are or who we are, taking responsibility for implementing them.

This was the clear message from our evening's presentations.

Despite the theatres of unrest and the consequent displacement of millions of civilian non-combatants in the Middle East, for example, there was a definite sense of optimism among the audience about the future of our New Zealand community in the hands of these young people. We can make a difference!

It is all too easy to be complacent – New Zealand is a peaceful land of plenty, at a comfortable distance from any 'trouble zones'. Civil unrest happens to 'others' 'overseas'!

It is time to get out of our comfort zone and take individual responsibility for implementing the SDGs for everyone – by living together as good neighbours, as stated in the preamble to the Charter of the UN.

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Co-worker, PTU, President Whanganui/Wanganui Branch UNA NZ

#### ***IV. Manual on “Free Prior and Informed Consent”***

##### ***An indigenous peoples' right and a good practice for local communities***

This new UN Manual for Project Practitioners, launched on 10 October 2016, will seek to ensure that indigenous peoples, who are the custodians of more than 80 per cent of global biodiversity, are given more say in development projects that will affect them. The Manual outlines essential steps to be followed so that Indigenous Peoples will be able to participate *'in a manner that is free of coercion'* and with all the information necessary regarding any development project - from its design to sharing its achievements after it has been completed – *prior* to any decisions having been made.

In a news release, Marcela Villarreal, Director of FAO Office for Partnerships, Advocacy and Capacity Building, stated that it is shocking that, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there is an *'underlying understanding'* that there are different rights for different human beings, and added: *'This is de facto marginalization by dividing rights for first and second class citizens'*.



While the UN Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) and other partner organisations have been working for many years with indigenous peoples and included their views into programmes such as food security and climate change, it was in 2015 that a joint step forward was decided upon to respect more fully the indigenous peoples rights through a more ‘programmatically approach’. FAO and each partner organisation (such as Action Aid, Int. Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent, World Vision, and others) subsequently incorporated the ‘Free, Prior and Informed Consent’ (FPIC) principles into their mode of work prior to the launching of the FPIC Manual, so as to ensure that the rights of indigenous peoples are respected.

In his Foreword to the Manual, Daniel Gustafson, FAO Deputy Director-General, speaks of the ‘paramount importance’ of the way an FPIC process is conducted: “*the time allocated for the discussions among the indigenous peoples, the cultural appropriateness of the way the information is conveyed, and the involvement of the whole community, including key groups like women, the elderly and the youth in the process, are all essential*”.

It is estimated that around 400 million indigenous peoples are spread over some 90 countries; that they make up about 75 percent of the world’s cultural diversity and speak over half of the world’s 7,000 surviving languages.

It mentions that there are various reasons for the increasing public focus on issues involving indigenous peoples. While their territories and livelihoods are being threatened, leading even to dispossession of their land and relocation by force, and their cultures disrespected, there has also been an increasing acknowledgment of the important contribution that traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples can make to realise the decisions made at the UN Climate Change Conference (Paris 2015). The text of the Paris Agreement makes several specific references, including in the specific topic areas regarding the exchange of experiences and adaptation, within which the indigenous peoples can help drive change at the country level where it is most needed.

<http://blogs.edf.org/climatetalks/2016/02/25/what-the-paris-agreements-references-to-indigenous-peoples-mean/> - <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6190e.pdf>

## ***V. “When We Are Bold: Women Who Turn Our Upside-down World Right”***

The above is the title of the book containing a collection of 28 profiles of women who boldly work for change, and written by ‘the women writers, thinkers and doers they inspire’. It was launched on 27 September at the Ottawa International Writers Festival in the presence of Peace Laureate Jody Williams and authors Madeleine Thien, Aja Monet and Casey Camp-Horinek.

This launch formed part of the Nobel Women’s Initiative in support the women’s peace movement and celebrating a decade of supporting the women’s peace movement and amplifying women’s voices for peace, justice and equality.

### **The Freedom Flotilla to Gaza:**

Together with 13 other peace loving and courageous women Miread Maguire joined the Freedom Flotilla to Gaza. These women came from many different countries, including USA, Australia, Sweden, New Zealand, South Africa, Malaysia, Spain, Chile, Algeria, Ireland, Russia, UK and Norway.

Explaining why she joined, she said: ‘*We sail to Gaza, a seven day, 1000 mile, journey because of our love for all the suffering children is as deep as the Mediterranean Ocean on which we sail. We want to hug them and tell them we love them and not to worry or be*

*afraid because Allah, God, loves them, they are each beautiful and special in Gods eyes and ours’.*

*‘As in Gaza so too around our world millions of children are suffering because of government policies of militarism’*

*‘I believe that life is indeed a beautiful profound mystery, in which all that matters is the depth of our compassion and love for each other and Mother earth.’*

<http://bit.ly/2e8b0a3>

## ***VI. Third International Conference on Financing for Development Addis Ababa, Ethiopia July 13-15 July 2015***

The Addis Ababa Action Agenda provides a new global framework for financing sustainable development beyond 2015.

In the first paragraph of the final text of the outcome document the Heads of States and High Representatives affirm their *‘strong political commitment to address the challenge of financing and creating an enabling environment at all levels for sustainable development in the spirit of global partnership and solidarity...’*, their goal being *“to end poverty and hunger, and to achieve sustainable development in its three dimensions through promoting inclusive economic growth, protecting the environment, and promoting social inclusion.*’ In this first paragraph Heads of States and High Representatives also commit to respecting all human rights and ensuring gender equality and women’s and girls’ empowerment.

A resolve was expressed to staying engaged to this important agenda through a strengthened follow-up process and through using existing ‘institutional arrangements’, which will include an annual Economic and Social Council forum on financing, the first of which will take place from 22 – 25 May 2017.

A 2nd edition of *‘The Financial System We Need’* was prepared in association with UNEP Finance Initiative. Its content is organised in three main parts: highlights on policy summary of the key messages; the main report, and ‘working papers’.

A number of other publications, including the paper *‘Financing Sustainable Development: Moving from Momentum to Transformation in a Time of Turmoil’* was published in time for the UN General Assembly 2016

[http://unepinquiry.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/The\\_Financial\\_System\\_We\\_Need\\_From\\_Momentum\\_to\\_Transformation\\_Summary\\_EN.pdf](http://unepinquiry.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/The_Financial_System_We_Need_From_Momentum_to_Transformation_Summary_EN.pdf) - <http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/>

## ***VII. Paris Climate Agreement to Enter into Force on 4 November 2016***

As of 5 October the Paris Agreement was ratified by 73 countries and the European Union, and will now enter into force in time for the Marrakech Climate Conference in November.

This is a momentous occasion, said UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, and now we must move from words to deeds and put the Paris Agreement into action: *‘We need all hands on deck – every part of society must be mobilized to reduce emissions and help communities adapt to inevitable climate impacts.’*

Patricia Espinosa, Executive Secretary of UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, also welcomed this ‘entry into force’ of the Paris Agreement and said that it brings a ‘*renewed urgency to the many issues governments are advancing to ensure full implementation of the Agreement, including the development of a rule book to operationalize the agreement and how international cooperation and much bigger flows of finance can speed up and scale up national climate action plans*’.

191 countries have signed the Agreement, signifying their intention to join.

<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2016/10/paris-climate-agreement-to-enter-into-force-on-4-november/>

### ***VIII. A Call for limiting the use of the Veto***

This urgent appeal came from the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein as the world witnesses the gruesome offensive on opposition-held neighbourhoods of eastern Aleppo and its allies. The ghastly avalanche and destruction; the use of weapons such as high-explosive blast bombs and incendiary weapons in heavily populated areas is having a devastating effect on the human population, their homes and environment.

The High Commissioner expressed his firm belief “*that the time has come for strong leadership and bold actions, and that the UN Security Council should, without any further delay, adopt criteria to restrain members from using the veto when there are serious concerns that war crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide may have been committed*”.

Reminding parties to the conflict that they must at all times and without exception strictly adhere to international humanitarian law\*, in particular the core principles of distinction, proportionality, and precaution, the Commissioner for Human Rights added: “*The failure by the enemy to adhere to international humanitarian law in no way removes the other side’s obligation to respect the law*”.

“Let us not forget that the destruction of cities like Warsaw, Stalingrad and Dresden, and the horror inflicted upon their civilians contributed to a great extent to the foundation of the United Nations. We cannot afford to fail Aleppo. We cannot afford to continue to fail the thousands of children trapped in this city awaiting their slaughter.”

\*[http://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B8954/%28httpAssets%29/B409BC0DCFA0171CC12571DE005BC1DD/\\$file/PROTOCOL+III.pdf](http://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B8954/%28httpAssets%29/B409BC0DCFA0171CC12571DE005BC1DD/$file/PROTOCOL+III.pdf)

### ***IX. ‘Challenges and Opportunities for the United Nations’***

The above is the title of the comprehensive ‘Vision Statement’ by Antonio Guterres, prior to his appointment by the General Assembly as the new UN Secretary-General by acclamation, on 13 October 2016. In this statement he stresses that, ‘*we live in times of multiple, evolving and mutually-reinforcing shifts*’, and we shall need to understand that the dynamics of geopolitical, demographic, climatic, technological, social and economic nature’ is enhancing the threats *as well as* the opportunities on an ‘*unprecedented scale*’.

A collective aim to achieve the goals of the agreements on sustainable development outlined in Agenda 2030, the Paris Climate Agreement and the Assis Ababa Action Agenda will have ‘*direct implications for peace and the realisation of human needs and fundamental rights*’. With clear priorities, tangible benchmarks and the power to mobilize all stakeholders promoting national ownership we can together ensure that no

one is left behind, stressed Antonio Guterres: “*With the horizon of 2030 the focus is on action and the watchword is ‘implementation, implementation, implementation’*”.

The Vision Statement also stresses that the UN must be at the forefront of the global movement towards gender equality, ‘*progressively moving from perceiving women and girls as a subject of protection to promoting their empowerment; from an isolated focus on women to gender mainstreaming’*’.

The values enshrined in the UN Charter reflect those that are central to all cultures and religions of the world and are reflected in the Holy Books – from the Qur’an to the Gospels and the Torah, from the Upanishads to the Pali canon’. This is a ‘*diversity that only enriches the strength of the expression of our common humanity’*’, when anxieties and fears are promoted and exploited by political populists, old-fashioned nationalists or religious fundamentalists.

As chief administrative officer, the UN Secretary-General must maintain an unwavering commitment to transparency, accountability and oversight, says Antonio Guterres, whose experiences as the UN High Commissioner for Refugees will have given him much valuable insight into and understanding of the many issues and challenges ahead.

The UN General-Assembly members, as well as Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, praised the historic selection process of Antonio Guterres as ‘*the most transparent, principled and merit-based appointment of the UN Secretary-General in the 70-year history of the United Nations’*’.

Peter Thomson of Fiji, the newly elected UN General Assembly President for the 71<sup>st</sup> session (from September 2016 to September 2017), met with the ‘*1 for 7 Billion’*’ representatives and expressed his appreciation for the role that it had played in making the selection process more transparent and inclusive. The representatives welcomed Peter Thomson’s commitment to building on the new standards of transparency and inclusivity set by his predecessor, Mogens Lykketoft.

**‘1 for 7 Billion’** is a global campaign, supported by over 750 organisations and individuals reaching more than 170 million people worldwide, which is committed to getting the best UN Secretary-General. The UN Secretary-General can play a crucial role in tackling global challenges and improving the lives of 7 billion people, and it is therefore vital that the best person is chosen for the job. However, the selection process has been secretive and outdated. ‘Just five countries hold sway over a decision that affects us all’. <http://www.1for7billion.org/news/2016/6/13/campaign-calls-for-transparency-and-end-to-monopoly-on-top-un-appointments>

## ***X. The Hopi Elder speaks***

‘It is time to be thoughtful and wise in our actions; and remember that all this violence and fear is not just from one lone sniper’, the Hopi Elder reminds us.

Behind the sniper are those who ‘seed, nurture and protect violence’: the arms manufacturing that profits multinational corporations, assault weapons in civilian life, the militarisation of local police, racism inherent in society, and fear that is spread by the sensationalism of the media – all this: ‘through a web that does not support life’.

The Hopi Elder’s advice to us is to banish the word ‘struggle’ from our attitude and vocabulary, and that all that we do will be done: *in a sacred manner and in celebration*’:

- Remembering what it is that we love;
- Opening our hearts and feel the pain;

- Opening our eyes to the truth, and
- Go forth, using reflection and wisdom to create actions to heal our world'

'We are the ones we've been waiting for.' (The Hopi Elder)

<http://www.elder-activists.org/blog/the-hopi-elder-speaks-fear-the-provocateurs>

## ***XI. Cities of Peace***

'International Cities of Peace' is a non-profit, tax-exempt association that is working to create an 'all-inclusive, non-polarizing network of world citizens working on the ground to bring peace to their communities'.

The association believes that peace is not just a hope – it is a right which is achievable through working together to create good and respectful relationships. But 'this can't be done in a polarized environment where the world is split into culprits and victims.'

The vision of Cities of Peace is to foster peace as a '*consensus value in Cities of Peace around the world*' through networking, encouraging, documenting and providing resources and information to leaders, organisations and people who is working toward realising this goal.

"Imagine a world of villages and towns dedicated to expanding their local peace economy and encouraging a global culture of peace. Safety, prosperity, and quality of life are universal values that bring peace to our lives."

David Adams, International Cities of Peace Advisory Council member, says "*I believe that the development of a network of culture of peace cities can be a decisive factor in the transition from a culture of war to a culture of peace based on a profound reform of the United Nations system.*"

For more general information can be obtained on

<http://www.internationalcitiesofpeace.org/how/how.html>

For further information or suggestions on the many different ways to get involved or offer support send an e-mail to: [info@InternationalCitiesOfPeace.org](mailto:info@InternationalCitiesOfPeace.org)

## ***XII. Habitat III***

### **UN expert calls for big 'Shift' in approach to housing:**

At the UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, Habitat III, (Quito October 2016), the UN Special Rapporteur \*) on the right to adequate housing, Leilani Farha, stressed that although there is keen interest in housing, it is not viewed as a human right, or as 'an issue requiring urgent attention to assist the most vulnerable groups in cities around the world.' Despite ever increasing homelessness, forced evictions and property speculations the '*international community has failed to place the right to adequate housing at the centre of its debates*', she said. Habitat III provided the opportunity for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, United Cities and Local Governments, and other stakeholders to push the international initiative, 'the Shift', which seeks to move away from housing as an investment or economic driver to housing 'as a human right'.

Homelessness and people who have been forced to live in intolerable housing conditions have been treated as a problem, said Leilani Farha. However, The Shift "*demand a different paradigm: those who are homeless and inadequately housed must be treated as*

*right claimants, and key actors must implement the right to adequate housing in a new urban rights agenda”.*

Leilani Farha saw Habitat III as ‘a symbolic moment’ where stakeholders came together to confirm their joint commitment to bring transformative changes to housing and stated that we will be ‘challenging the dominant understanding of who counts and who doesn’t’, as well as the ‘dominant perceptions about who cities are for’. With over 100 participants from all sectors, ‘The Shift’ affirmed a common desire for change – to make the world a more human place in which to live.

This is only a first step, she said; it is not conferences that make change: *‘it is people!’*

<http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=20725&LangID=E>

\*) The Special Rapporteurs are part of what is known as ‘the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council’, which is the largest body of independent experts within the fact-finding and monitoring mechanisms of the Council. They may address either specific country situation or thematic issues in all parts of the world. Special Rapporteurs work on a voluntary basis; they are not UN staff, nor do they receive salary for their work. They are independent from any government or organisation and serve in their individual capacity.

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Peace is based on respect for life, the spirit of reverence for life.  
Not only do we have to respect the lives of human beings,  
but we have to respect the lives of animals, vegetables and minerals.  
Rocks can be alive. A rock can be destroyed.  
The Earth also.  
The way we farm, the way we deal with our garbage -  
all these things are related to each other “  
*Thich Nhat Hanh – Vietnamese Buddhist*

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### ***XIII. The Great Invocation***

From the point of Light within the Mind of God  
Let light stream forth into the minds of men.  
Let Light descend on Earth.

From the point of Love within the Heart of God  
Let love stream forth into the hearts of men  
May Christ return to Earth.

From the centre where the Will of God is known  
Let purpose guide the little wills of men –  
The purpose which the Masters know and serve.

From the centre which we call the race of men  
Let the Plan of Love and Light work out  
And may it seal the door where evil dwells.

Let Light and Love and Power restore the plan on Earth.