

Speech of the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara and head of MINURSO for the International Day of Peace, 21 September 2012

Good morning friends and colleagues,

We are here today to celebrate the International Day of Peace.

On this occasion, I would like to share with you the Secretary-General's message for the day, which is as follows:

“On the International Day of Peace, the United Nations calls for a complete cessation of hostilities around the world.

We also ask people everywhere to observe a minute of silence, at noon local time, to honour the victims – those who have lost their lives, and those who survived but must now cope with trauma and pain.

The theme of this year's observance is “Sustainable Peace for a Sustainable Future”.

Armed conflicts attack the very pillars of sustainable development.

Natural resources must be used for the benefit of society, not to finance wars.

Children should be in school, not recruited into armies.

National budgets should focus on building human capacity, not deadly weapons.

On the International Day of Peace, I call on combatants around the world to find peaceful solutions to their conflicts.

Let us all work together for a safe, just and prosperous future for all”.

Friends and colleagues,

Let me now add a few words of my own.

The International Day of Peace was established by the General Assembly in 1981 and is observed every year at the start of its General Assembly's annual session. It is— in the words of the resolution which declared it -- devoted to strengthening the ideals of peace, both within and among all nations and peoples.

Peace, understood as a state of affairs both within and among peoples and within and among nations, has many facets – it is more than simply the absence of war between states.

As you have just heard in the Secretary-General's message, the theme of this year's observance of the International Day of Peace is “Sustainable Peace for a Sustainable Future”

This theme was chosen because of this year, between 13 and 22 June, world leaders, together with civil society, local authorities and the private sector, met in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development to renew political commitment towards long-term sustainable development.

The UN Conference in Rio stressed that there can be no sustainable future without a sustainable peace and that a sustainable peace must be built on sustainable development.

Here in MINURSO, each and every one of us, we work hard everyday to contribute to keep the peace within the traditional framework of the peacekeeping. And we can be proud of that.

But we also should contribute, as part of the human community, to the affirmation and implementation of the values embodied in this year's theme of the International Day of Peace – Sustainable Development, Sustainable Peace and Sustainable Future.

This relates less to what we do, than to the way we do it. While we serve the peace through our daily activities, we should do so with respect for the environment, for the nature, for the culture around us. The way we conduct ourselves in our work is as important as our work itself. And the key word is “Respect”.

Thank you.