

**SOKA UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA
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**PEACE IN YOUR LIFE - PEACE IN YOUR LIFETIME
A HUMANIST PERSPECTIVE ON GLOBAL PEACE EFFORTS**

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First of all let me say what an honour it is to be here today at SOKA University to address your third undergraduate commencement. I have followed the exciting start up of this wonderful institution and consider myself very privileged to be participating in this wonderful ceremony.

Next, of course, I must congratulate each and every one of you on graduating today. Many of you have come from far away to attend the University, and I know how hard all of you have worked. Today is the culmination of all your work, and I know also that for many of you it is a first stage on a longer academic journey.

You see before you a very fortunate person. You are looking at someone who has achieved a large part of her youthful and idealist goals in life, and one of the lessons I want to share with you is that it is possible to live your dream and to make a difference. In today's world of complex governments and large corporations, we can easily feel out of control, but Margaret Mead said, don't ever doubt that one person can change the world. In fact it is the only thing that ever has. The great movements began with one person standing up and others joining in. Even within large systems, much change and growth depends on the leadership and commitment of people with ideas and the courage to pursue them.

It is important in life to have something which you are passionate about, something which drives you. Some of us know from childhood what we want, whether it is to play the cello or make a scientific breakthrough. Some of us look back on our lives and say, yes, now I know that that is exactly what I wanted to do. I think I belong to this second category.

I am currently heading up the United Nations first ever Peacebuilding Office and am therefore a part of worldwide efforts to improve our ability at the global level to bring an end to persistent violent conflicts. I have had the privilege of heading up a UN Peacekeeping mission and I have worked for many years in

development and humanitarian work. I have had the satisfaction of knowing that I have made a difference in peoples' lives.

It was during my own undergraduate days, at the University of British Columbia that I developed my ideals of service and a belief in humanity, a belief that you could find peace in the world by reaching that essential humanity in every person. In my naivety, I was convinced that for people to make peace and to live in peace, all they had to do was listen to each other, to have empathy. I have learnt that it is not naïve to believe these things, in fact, some very significant developments show that the world is coming round to that way of thinking, and that is what I would like to explain to you today. So hang on to your core beliefs and don't let people accuse you of being naïve. Being true to yourself is not naïve.

I have always believed in multilateralism, the approach whereby nations work together to find global solutions which bring the greatest good to the greatest number. The UN Charter was an inspiration. It starts, "We the peoples of the United Nations, determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war...". We must ask ourselves the question: "have we come anywhere near that goal, 60 years further on?" Headlines tell us that war is rampant and threats, especially of terrorism, are getting worse. I was in New York on 9/11. Every day there are stories of Iraq, Afghanistan, the Middle East, and stories of terrorists blowing up markets, or plots being foiled.

But there is another story which I would like to tell you which doesn't make the headlines. It is a story which can inspire you and help you to believe that we may achieve Peace in your Lifetime, a peace based on a respect for human life, based on the knowledge that each and everyone of us deserves Peace in our Life. It is based on the concept that peace is more than the absence of war, and must go beyond old ideas of political security to the concept of human security and quality of life.

Your own university's ideals and vision are based on a student centred approach to promote peace and human rights by fostering a humanistic perspective on the world. I believe you are part of a trend which is growing and which has the power to change the world. Human security is based on a people centred approach to peace and security, based on human rights and the imperative of protecting individuals and communities. Human security can include attacking hunger, disease and natural disasters, all of which are threats to life and kill far more people than war, genocide and terrorism combined.

Yours is a generation which has grown up in the post Cold War era. This was an era characterized by the polarization between two dominant powers and during which most conflicts were circumscribed by their relationship to one or other of those powers. During this time, the main concern of nation states was the security

of the state. What happened inside the state borders was left very much to the workings of the state. The end of the Cold War has brought about an extraordinary change, beginning with a relatively more cooperative spirit amongst members of the UN Security Council. While there was an upsurge of conflict as the lid came off, so to speak, with 1992 being a peak year in the numbers of conflicts raging around the world, the 1990's ushered in new possibilities for acting collectively in the spirit of the original UN Charter. The number of UN peacekeeping missions grew rapidly; the UN Secretary General published an Agenda for Peace which laid out an ambitious agenda for preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peacekeeping and post conflict peacebuilding; and gradually more and more conflicts became the subject of international humanitarian action and the subject of external peace mediation efforts.

However, the decade registered some spectacular failures, showing that the desire to rush in was not enough. The international community withdrew from Somalia when the US suffered a public humiliation; the Security Council refused to authorize preventive action in the Rwanda genocide; and the Srebrenica massacre occurred on the UN watch. All of these horrors proved that the international community did not have the policies or tools to implement their new found activism. But, the fact is that these tragedies have inspired a series of major initiatives, which promise to make a real difference to global peace operations, based on a human agenda.

Firstly, peacemaking has become more widespread. More wars end now in negotiated settlements rather than victory for one side. By 2003 there were half as many wars than in 1992. During the Cold War years, more wars started every decade than ended, but this trend has been inexorably reversed as more wars ended than began in the 1990s. Between 1988 and 2001 there were 100 conflicts which ended and a dramatic decline in numbers of people killed in wars. More civil wars ended in the past 15 years than in the previous 200 years. The conclusion that has been drawn is that this is linked to an upsurge of international activism aimed at ending conflicts, much of it through UN efforts, but much of it also through dedicated efforts by individual countries, and increasingly, by organizations formed expressly for this purpose.

Secondly, peacekeeping has learnt from the tragic mistakes of the 1990s. The UN Secretary General launched a reform movement with the result that peacekeeping missions being mounted today are unrecognizable in comparison with the operations of the past. UN Peacekeeping has kept the peace in Mozambique, East Timor, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Burundi, Haiti, and Cote d'Ivoire. The Democratic Republic of Congo remains a difficult situation but is dramatically improved from the

days when it was considered the 3rd World War in Africa. Numbers of peacekeepers has grown to close to 100,000; mandates are more robust, and include the right to use force; and missions are now multi-disciplinary and include civilian peacebuilding functions such as transitional justice, human rights, rebuilding of the army and the civilian police, and protection of civilians.

The concept of protection of civilians is directly rooted in the human being at the centre of our efforts. It is a simple idea but one which is extremely difficult to implement. It is based on the realization that in so many of the world's conflicts it is the innocent civilians who bear the brunt of the war. You have seen the massive movements of refugees, with people in their hundreds of thousands being forced to flee their homes. You have seen the horrible statistics of millions of people who have died in the Congo because the war has cut them off from food production and medical services. In response, the humanitarian community has developed policies and practices to engage with combatants to ensure that the international community can get access to war affected people, to try to increase their access to food and to medical help when required. The capacity of the international community to provide and manage humanitarian assistance has multiplied enormously over the past decade.

But assistance is not enough. Ultimately the most important humanitarian objective must be to bring an end to the violence that has caused the humanitarian disaster. In 1999 the UN Secretary General caused a major controversy among the member states of the UN by calling for humanitarian intervention, by which he described a process which would allow the international community to intervene in cases where major humanitarian and human rights abuses were taking place. Why was this controversial? Because it implied an interference in the internal affairs of the state, something which would violate sovereignty. But it rightly raised the question of what is the meaning of sovereignty.

The answer was provided through a doctrine which was subsequently developed and which has now been adopted by the UN General Assembly, called the Responsibility to Protect. Under this doctrine, it is recognized that the protection of citizens rests with the nation state, but goes on to say that if the nation state fails in that responsibility, then the international community has the obligation to take up that responsibility and intervene to protect those citizens. The adoption of this as a general concept was a major breakthrough, but it still has to be put into practice. The most obvious and worrisome example is Darfur, where the international community has so far failed to agree on how to implement its Responsibility to Protect. They are not prepared to invade and risk creating more harm than good. The example of Iraq is too dramatic.

There are many other examples of how the international community is focussing more and more on human quality of life as a goal. In the field of Human Rights, the international community has developed a strong approach not only in exposing human rights abuses but also in developing tools to assist poorer countries with weak human rights records to improve their record.

The international justice agenda has also advanced with the creation of the International Criminal Court. The international community now has a tool to bring to justice the perpetrators of genocide and other crimes against humanity. The Mine Action Treaty has already reduced substantially the number of people at risk.

The development agenda has advanced in important ways as well. There is much greater coherence than ever before on what works and what doesn't work and a much greater emphasis on helping countries get on track, based on improving the lives of their citizens. There is a greater focus now on helping countries to develop their capacity to govern, to improve the capacity of the state in all areas to address the needs of their populations. The world has adopted a series of objectives, called the Millenium Development Goals aimed at reducing poverty and hunger, improving peoples' access to health and education, addressing issues of women's empowerment, improving the sustainability of the environment and tackling the great diseases which ravage the developing world, including AIDS.

At the beginning of the Millenium, the UN Secretary General launched a major report entitled "We the Peoples". The title was taken from the opening lines of the UN charter, which I quoted above, and was aimed at signalling the fact that the commitments of the charter and the benefits of the charter were for the people of the world, not governments. The Charter does not start out saying "We the Governments".

In all of this agenda, there was one piece missing. I listed earlier the agenda for peace, which included Peacebuilding. While the number of negotiated settlements was increasing, more wars ending with peacekeeping efforts, and more tools being developed to assist countries coming out of conflict, to address human rights abuses and to bring criminals to justice, the dramatic statistics showed that far too many conflict situations were recurring. Studies now show that a third or more of countries coming out of conflict risk returning to violent conflict within five or ten years. The issue was identified as one of neglect. We were helping set them up on their feet, then leaving them to it. So the Peacebuilding Commission, a brand new organ of the UN, was born last year. It is my privilege to support the Commission in establishing a more strategic approach to peacebuilding, and to ensure that the international community stays the course and accompanies these countries both politically and financially to prevent the recurrence of violent conflict.

Peacebuilding has become a movement now. There is a tremendous mushrooming of effort, with civil society organizations, academic work and government interest all over the world. It is very encouraging, but it will take time to see if we succeed.

The challenges facing all of us are monumental, but with some notable exceptions, the world appears to be learning critical lessons. Peace must be based on the individual, and the humanitarian imperative must drive political solutions. Collective action can achieve better results than unilateral action. The UN is still needed, despite its flaws - it is, after all, a forum where we attempt the impossible feat of trying to get 193 countries to agree on the most complex agendas. But it is only in the forum of the United Nations that we have tested all the global concepts I have mentioned and given them legitimacy. And, finally, individuals matter. Most of these global concepts have been launched by enlightened individuals or by individual countries with a goal of making things work better for We the Peoples. You, the next generation, must play your part.

I believe that the symbolic arrival of the new Millennium has offered us an opportunity to make the world a better place. I have not even touched on the challenge of dealing with climate change. I have been enormously privileged in that I have been able to play a part in this movement of bringing people back to the centre of our global peace efforts. This can also be your goal, that you who benefit from a life that most of the world's people can only imagine, can use the Peace in your Life to advance further this humanist perspective on Global Peace efforts to contribute to Peace in your own Lifetime.