



On International Peace Day, Ban turns spotlight on world's young people



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon rings the Peace Bell in observance of International Day of Peace

17 September 2010 – In a time-honoured ritual at United Nations Headquarters in New York today Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon rang a bell cast from pennies donated by children from 60 nations to inaugurate the annual International Day of Peace, which this year is dedicated to the world's young.

"Young people today are at home with global diversity; they are comfortable in an interconnected world. Yet they are also vulnerable to the forces of extremism," Mr. Ban **said** before observing a minute of silence and then driving the ringing beam three times into the bell.

"So I say to all governments and our partners: let us do more to give them a world of tolerance and opportunity. And I say to all young people: join us."

A gift from Japan that hangs from a wooden beam in a garden in front of UN Headquarters, the bell has tolled every year in a solemn call for peace since 1981, when the General Assembly established the Day to coincide with its opening session every September.

Flanked by UN Messengers of Peace and Goodwill Ambassadors Midori Goto, Yuna Kim, Anggun, Catarina Furtado, Goedele Liekens and Elie Wiesel, Mr. Ban listened as a children's choir played music.

In his remarks Mr. Ban acknowledged that young people are "impatient, frustrated by poverty, injustice and environmental degradation.

"You are concerned that we, your elders, have not made greater headway against these threats," he added, noting that world leaders will gather for a summit on the Millennium Development Goals (**MDGs**), a series of targets aiming to slash extreme hunger and poverty, maternal and infant mortality, disease and lack of access to education and health services, all by 2015.

"There have been remarkable gains, but we need faster progress – much, much faster. Young people can play a central role."

Mr. Ban then opened a student conference attended by more than 600 young people in a UN hall and hundreds of others linked by video conference sites at UN peacekeeping missions around the world.

At a later tea gathering for peace with UN Association of Japan president Genshitsu Sen, Mr. Ban **recalled** his recent visit to Hiroshima. "I will never forget meeting the survivors – the hibakusha – or their painful and moving testimony. I was very impressed and moved this morning when young students sang a song of peace with the piano which survived the atomic attack 65 years ago."

Ms. Kim, who won a gold medal in skating for South Korea in the 2010 Beijing Olympics and recently became a Goodwill Ambassador for the UN Children's Fund (**UNICEF**), told the UN News Centre she wanted to use her own positive experience to help children around the world and encourage others to do the same.

"I think it's very important to have a dream and I hope I can share the message with children in need," she said.

General Assembly President Joseph Deiss said the Peace Bell was an important symbol of the ultimate goal at the United Nations: that the message of peace will resound around the world.

"Yet, many conflicts still ravage our world and cause distress and suffering to hundreds of thousands of men, women and children. For peace to resound around the world, we have to work hard," he declared. "Peace can only be achieved through tolerance, dialogue, friendship and respect among peoples, liberty and democracy, justice and prosperity."

Normally marked on 21 September, this year's Headquarters ceremony was brought forward so as not to clash with next week's MDG summit. Other ceremonies around the world will continue up until 21 September.

In Geneva today, a team composed of diplomats from UN permanent missions and staff members of UN agencies in the city played soccer against a team of local high-school students to mark the Day.

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